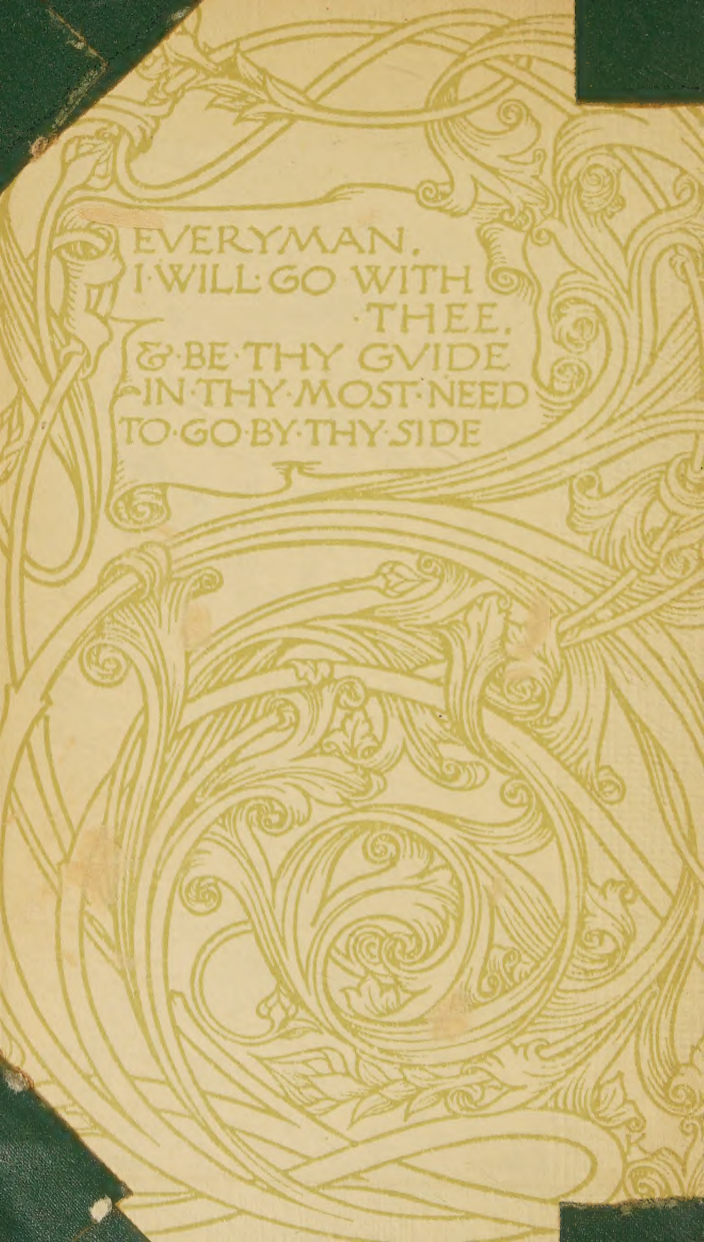
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TRANSLATED BY SHELLEY DEAN MILMAN, POTTER AND WODHULL, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY V. R. R.

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INTRODUCTION

THE most poetical translation of Euripides into any tongue, Shelley's radiant version of the *Cyclops*, which opens the present volume, stands easily at the head of all our English plays from the Greek. Shelley probably made it about 1818-19. Writing to Leigh Hunt, November 1819, he spoke of the Greek plays "tempting him to throw over their perfect and glowing forms the grey veil of my own words." In his *Essays and Studies*[1] Mr Swinburne, after pointing out some of the gaps and errors in Shelley's rendering, due in part to the imperfect text the translator had used, says: "While revising the version of the *Cyclops* I have felt again, and more keenly, the old delight of wonder at its matchless grace of unapproachable beauty, its strength, ease, delicate simplicity and sufficiency."

Mr Swinburne has not by any means spared the good fame of Euripides himself, regarded as a dramatist; and Mr Swinburne's pronouncement is of a temper which, until very recently, might be held typical of the modern critical attitude. But now, thanks to Dr. Verrall, Professor Gilbert Murray and other writers, a very marked reaction has set in.

We might quote opinion, indeed from many brilliant scholars who have helped to reverse the Euripidean current. The old fashion, says Mr Way, of "disparaging his genius (in which Schlegel led the way, giving all the weight of his authority to a sentence which others were too uncritical or too timorous to revise) is now utterly discredited. We have

[1] *Essays and Studies:* Notes on the Text of Shelley, p. 211.

ceased to regard the generations of Greeks and Romans, who loved and reverenced him, as degenerate fools and blind, *and are at last making some humble efforts to understand them and to recover their point of view.*"

The argument is continued by Dr. Verrall, to whose remarkable book, *Euripides the Rationalist*, we owe the following passages:—"The right view of Euripides, the capacity of understanding him, is a thing which we moderns have yet to *recover;* and our only way is to begin with recognising that somewhere in our notions about the poet there must be something fundamentally wrong. It should not be possible, as it was not long ago for an English poet bound to the poets of Greece by mutual obligations, to pronounce Euripides no peer of his peers, a dramatist not to be ranked as the equal of those with whom he was actually ranked by the judgment of Athens and all the ancient world, without perceiving that he condemns, not the object of his criticism, but simply his own comprehension."

Turning to Mr Swinburne: "Euripides, he has told us, was a 'botcher.' Deserved or not by the poet, the phrase is apt enough to indicate the nature of modern objections. It appropriately describes the sort of dissatisfaction which we feel after reading, with the modern expositions, some of Euripides' best known and best appreciated works. There is plenty of excellent material; single scenes, or it may be all the scenes, are wrought with undeniable and astonishing power. The murmurs begin when we contemplate the work as a whole: and then the 'botcher' can no longer be kept out of our minds. After all, it would seem, the thing is a patch-work. The excellences of the parts do not seem to subserve any common design, nay, even are mutually repugnant. The author is doubtless a master of his tools, but still, to speak familiarly, he 'does not know what he is driving at.'"

In considering the art of Euripides, and the change in

our feeling for the suggestive, almost interrogative, presentment of his tragic and troubled fables of death and human existence, we have to realise that our own current philosophy, and our own dramatic art, European and English, are changing or have already changed.

"Euripides," says Coleridge, "brought tragedy by many steps nearer to the real world than his predecessors had ever done." In him too the accent of the questioner, the questioning interpreter, is heard above the older fateful accent of Æschylus. We see the movement of Euripides' own mind; we are a party to his dramatic analysis of the hopes and fears that play upon human nature and his own mind, and issue in a kind of conditional nihilism. The strange thing is that Aristophanes, who struck the modern note too in another way, either did not understand the art of Euripides, or, perceiving its tendencies to agnosticism or worse, understood it only too well: and in either case made it the repeated mark of his irrepressible satire. Aristophanes did not either spare the man. He declared in effect that he was not a gentleman, by birth or otherwise: that his mother was a cabbage-seller. Philochorus and others, however, have told us he was of good family. Euripides was born in Salanus, it is recorded, on the very day of the famous battle, 480 B.C., in which Æschylus was one of the battlers. Despite the stigma of Aristophanes it is certain that the boy Euripides was given an education which was costly—for Prodicus, his tutor in rhetoric, was noted for excessive fees. He was trained too by Protagoras and Anaxagoras; learned to paint, and was crowned in his seventeenth year in the Eleusinean games. In the year following he wrote his first play—one among the scores of his lost plays. He went on writing for years before he gained the Olympic Prize for the first time, with his *Hippolytus*. He early seems to have become a favourite playwright of the intellectual coteries. The orators loved him for the forensic power shown in the longer

speeches of his dramatic personages—a power which Aristophanes again laughed to scorn. The praise of Cicero and Quintilian might well console him, however. It is said that many of the ideas in Euripides were derived from his friend and some time friendly master in philosophy, Socrates. Indeed, as Bacon is credited by certain people with having written the better part of Shakespeare's plays, Socrates is said to have been the ghost under the stage of Euripides.

In his life Euripides was never allowed to fall into that complacency which is the death of intellectual art. His first wife, rumour hath it, deceived him; so did his second. Then, like Æschylus, he went or was driven into exile from Athens. This step may have been hastened by a public charge of impiety, which must have ended in imprisonment. From this exile, at the Court of Archelaus, he did not return. His death was strange, tragic as any told of in his plays. In some way, out of revenge or by accident, the hounds of Archelaus were set upon him, and he was frightfully injured and died from his wounds. This was in 406 B.C., when he was a man of seventy-five. Athens begged for his body, but it was buried in Macedon, at Pella.

Of the other translators of Euripides who figure in the present volumes, Robert Potter, who was born in 1721, published his translation of Euripides in 1780, following that of Æschylus in 1777. He had been a country schoolmaster and a curate, an industrious versifier and a poor scholar; he had had the signal honour of being attacked by Dr Johnson. He was a man of sixty-seven before any good fortune came to him. "I did not like to promote him earlier," said the Lord Chancellor, "for fear of making him indolent." What we know to-day of Michael Wodhull, who supplies the bulk of the plays in the second volume, is to be gathered from the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and from his register in the British Museum Catalogue. His translation of Euripides appeared in 1809; he had

already published original poems in 1772 and 1798. Dean Milman's delightful version of the *Bacchæ*, which by the courtesy of Mr Murray we are able to include, was first published, with the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, in 1865.

At the head of our modern criticism of Euripides, we ought to quote his own line, "If gods do wrong, surely no gods they are." "To understand and enjoy the art of Euripides," says Dr Verrall, "we need not accept his views; but we must know, feel, and remember what they were. *His stories assume that 'the gods' do not exist;* and unless we are alive to this, unless we keep it *always* before us, the best of Euripides, the essence of Euripides must be sealed up from us." And with this may be read Professor Murray's comment on the *Troädes*, as "the first great expression of the spirit of pity for mankind" heard in European literature,—"a principle which has made the most precious and possibly the most destructive elements of innumerable rebellions, revolutions and martyrdoms, and of at least two great religions."

Last of all, let us add that prayer of Euripides, found among his remains, which runs: "Omnipotent God, send Light unto men, that they may know whence their evils come and how they may avoid them."

V. R. R.

EURIPIDES—TRANSLATIONS

Translations of Works

R. Potter, 1781-83, 1808, 1814, 1832, Nineteen Tragedies and Fragments; M. Wodhull, 1782, 1809; literal trans., T. A. Buckley, 1850, construed literally, Dr Giles, Key to the Classics, 1856, etc.; into Eng. prose, E. P. Coleridge, 1891, etc.; into Eng. verse, A. S. Way, 1894-98.

The *Cyclops* Translation by Shelley, 1819; *Medea* by Mrs Webster; *Alaustis* (A Transcript in Balaustion), R. Browning; *Bacchae*, by Milman, 1865.

The chief edition of the text is by Dindorf, 1863, 1870; the result of a full investigation of the MSS. is given by Kirchkoff in his editions.

EURIPIDES

THE CYCLOPS

A Satyric Drama

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

SILENUS.	ULYSSES.
CHORUS OF SATYRS.	THE CYCLOPS.

Silenus. O Bacchus, what a world of toil, both now
And ere these limbs were overworn with age,
Have I endured for thee! First, when thou fled'st
The mountain-nymphs who nurst thee, driven afar
By the strange madness Juno sent upon thee;
Then in the battle of the sons of Earth,
When I stood foot by foot close to thy side,
No unpropitious fellow-combatant,
And driving through his shield my wingèd spear,
Slew vast Enceladus. Consider now,
Is it a dream of which I speak to thee?
By Jove it is not, for you have the trophies!
And now I suffer more than all before.
For when I heard that Juno had devised
A tedious voyage for you, I put to sea
With all my children quaint in search of you,
And I myself stood on the beakèd prow
And fixed the naked mast, and all my boys
Leaning upon their oars, with splash and strain
Made white with foam the green and purple sea,—
And so we sought you, king. We were sailing
Near Malea, when an eastern wind arose,
And drove us to this wild Ætnean rock;
The one-eyed children of the Ocean God,
The man-destroying Cyclopses inhabit,
On this wild shore, their solitary caves,
And one of these, named Polypheme, has caught us
To be his slaves; and so, for all delight
Of Bacchic sports, sweet dance and melody,
We keep this lawless giant's wandering flocks.

My sons indeed, on far declivities,
Young things themselves, tend on the youngling sheep,
But I remain to fill the water casks,
Or sweeping the hard floor, or ministering
Some impious and abominable meal
To the fell Cyclops. I am wearied of it
And now I must scrape up the littered floor
With this great iron rake, so to receive
My absent master and his evening sheep
In a cave neat and clean. Even now I see
My children tending the flocks hitherward.
Ha! what is this? are your Sicinnian measures
Even now the same, as when with dance and song
You brought young Bacchus to Althæa's halls?

Chorus of Satyrs.

STROPHE.

Where has he of race divine
Wandered in the winding rocks?
Here the air is calm and fine
For the father of the flocks;—
Here the grass is soft and sweet,
And the river-eddies meet
In the trough beside the cave,
Bright as in their fountain wave.—
Neither here, nor on the dew
Of the lawny uplands feeding?
Oh, you come!—a stone at you
Will I throw to mend your breeding;—
Get along, you hornèd thing,
Wild, seditious, rambling!

EPODE.

An Iacchic melody
To the golden Aphrodite
Will I lift, as erst did I
Seeking her and her delight,
With the Mænads, whose white feet
To the music glance and fleet.
Bacchus, O belovèd, where,
Shaking wide thy yellow hair,
Wanderest thou alone, afar?
To the one-eyed Cyclops, we,

Who by right thy servants are,
Minister in misery,
In these wretched goat-skins clad,
Far from thy delights and thee.

Silenus. Be silent, sons; command the slaves to drive
The gathered flocks into the rock-roofed cave.
Chorus. Go! But what needs this serious haste, O father?
Silenus. I see a Grecian vessel on the coast,
And thence the rowers with some general
Approaching to this cave.—About their necks
Hang empty vessels, as they wanted food,
And water-flasks.—Oh miserable strangers!
Whence come they, that they know not what and who
My master is, approaching in ill hour
The inhospitable roof of Polypheme,
And the Cyclopian jaw-bone, man-destroying?
Be silent, Satyrs, while I ask and hear
Whence coming, they arrive the Ætnean hill.
Ulysses. Friends, can you show me some clear water spring,
The remedy of our thirst? Will any one
Furnish with food seamen in want of it?
Ha! what is this? We seem to be arrived
At the blithe court of Bacchus. I observe
This sportive band of Satyrs near the caves.
First let me greet the elder.—Hail!
Silenus. Hail thou,
O Stranger! tell thy country and thy race.
Ulysses. The Ithacan Ulysses and the king
Of Cephalonia.
Silenus. Oh! I know the man,
Wordy and shrewd, the son of Sisyphus.
Ulysses. I am the same, but do not rail upon me,—
Silenus. Whence sailing do you come to Sicily?
Ulysses. From Ilion, and from the Trojan toils.
Silenus. How touched you not at your paternal shore?
Ulysses. The strength of tempests bore me here by force.
Silenus. The self-same accident occurred to me.
Ulysses. Were you then driven here by stress of weather?
Silenus. Following the Pirates who had kidnapped Bacchus.
Ulysses. What land is this, and who inhabit it?—
Silenus. Ætna, the loftiest peak in Sicily.

Ulysses. And are there walls, and tower-surrounded towns?
Silenus. There are not.—These lone rocks are bare of men.
Ulysses. And who possess the land? the race of beasts?
Silenus. Cyclops, who live in caverns, not in houses.
Ulysses. Obeying whom? Or is the state popular?
Silenus. Shepherds: no one obeys any in aught.
Ulysses. How live they? do they sow the corn of Ceres?
Silenus. On milk and cheese, and on the flesh of sheep.
Ulysses. Have they the Bromian drink from the vine's stream?
Silenus. Ah! no; they live in an ungracious land.
Ulysses. And are they just to strangers?—hospitable?
Silenus. They think the sweetest thing a stranger brings
Is his own flesh.
Ulysses. What! do they eat man's flesh?
Silenus. No one comes here who is not eaten up.
Ulysses. The Cyclops now—where is he? Not at home?
Silenus. Absent on Ætna, hunting with his dogs.
Ulysses. Know'st thou what thou must do to aid us hence?
Silenus. I know not: we will help you all we can.
Ulysses. Provide us food, of which we are in want.
Silenus. Here is not anything, as I said, but meat.
Ulysses. But meat is a sweet remedy for hunger.
Silenus. Cow's milk there is, and store of curdled cheese.
Ulysses. Bring out:—I would see all before I bargain.
Silenus. But how much gold will you engage to give?
Ulysses. I bring no gold, but Bacchic juice.
Silenus. Oh joy!
'Tis long since these dry lips were wet with wine.
Ulysses. Maron, the son of the god, gave it me.
Silenus. Whom I have nursed a baby in my arms.
Ulysses. The son of Bacchus, for your clearer knowledge.
Silenus. Have you it now?—or is it in the ship?
Ulysses. Old man, this skin contains it, which you see.
Silenus. Why this would hardly be a mouthful for me.
Ulysses. Nay, twice as much as you can draw from thence.
Silenus. You speak of a fair fountain, sweet to me.
Ulysses. Would you first taste of the unmingled wine?
Silenus. 'Tis just—tasting invites the purchaser.
Ulysses. Here is the cup, together with the skin.
Silenus. Pour: that the draught may fillip my remembrance.
Ulysses. See!
Silenus. Papaiax! what a sweet smell it has!

Ulysses. You see it then?—
Silenus. By Jove, no? but I smell it.
Ulysses. Taste, that you may not praise it in words only.
Silenus. Babai! Great Bacchus calls me forth to dance!
Joy! joy!
Ulysses. Did it flow sweetly down your throat?
Silenus. So that it tingled to my very nails.
Ulysses. And in addition I will give you gold.
Silenus. Let gold alone! only unlock the cask.
Ulysses. Bring out some cheeses now, or a young goat.
Silenus. That will I do, despising any master.
Yes, let me drink one cup, and I will give
All that the Cyclops feed upon their mountains.[1]

. . . . . .

Chorus. Ye have taken Troy and laid your hands on Helen?

[1] The following continuation of Silenus's speech, with the further completion of the passage, is from Wodhull's version. As it shows, Shelley adopted the old reading of his text which gave to Silenus the subsequent speech of the Chorus before his re-entrance.—

"I'd from Leucadè, when completely drunk,
Into the ocean take a lover's leap,
Shutting my eyes. For he who, when he quaffs
The mantling bowl, exults not, is a madman.
Through wine new joys our wanton bosoms fire,
With eager arms we clasp the yielding fair,
And in the giddy dance forget each ill
That heretofore assailed us. So I kiss
The rich potation; let the stupid Cyclops
Weep with that central eye which in his front
Glares horribly. [*Exit* SILENUS.

Chorus. Attend: for we must hold
A long confabulation, O Ulysses.
Ulysses. We meet each other like old friends.
Chorus. Was Troy
By you subdued? was Helen taken captive?
Ulysses. And the whole house of Priam we laid waste.
Chorus. When ye had seized on that transcendent fair,
Did ye then all enjoy her in your turn,
Because she loves variety of husbands?
False to her vows, when she the painted greaves
Around the legs of Paris, on his neck
The golden chain, beheld, with love deep smitten,
From Menelaus, best of men, she fled.
Ah! would to Heaven no women had been born
But such as were reserved for my embraces.

SILENUS *returning.*

Silenus. See, here are sheep," etc.

Ulysses. And utterly destroyed the race of Priam.

. . . . . .

Silenus. The wanton wretch! she was bewitched to see
The many-coloured anklets and the chain
Of woven gold which girt the neck of Paris,
And so she left that good man Menelaus.
There should be no more women in the world
But such as are reserved for me alone.—
See, here are sheep, and here are goats, Ulysses,
Here are unsparing cheeses of pressed milk;
Take them; depart with what good speed ye may;
First leaving my reward, the Bacchic dew
Of joy-inspiring grapes.

Ulysses. Ah me! Alas!
What shall we do? the Cyclops is at hand!
Old man, we perish! whither can we fly?

Silenus. Hide yourselves quick within that hollow rock.

Ulysses. 'Twere perilous to fly into the net.

Silenus. The cavern has recesses numberless;
Hide yourself quick.

Ulysses. That will I never do!
The mighty Troy would be indeed disgraced
If I should fly one man. How many times
Have I withstood, with shield immovable,
Ten thousand Phrygians!—if I needs must die,
Yet will I die with glory;—if I live,
The praise which I have gained will yet remain.

Silenus. What, ho! assistance, comrades, haste, assistance!

The Cyclops, Silenus, Ulysses; Chorus.

Cyclops. What is this tumult? Bacchus is not here,
Nor tympanies nor brazen castanets.
How are my young lambs in the cavern? Milking
Their dams or playing by their sides? And is
The new cheese pressed into the bulrush baskets?
Speak! I'll beat some of you till you rain tears—
Look up, not downwards, when I speak to you.

Silenus. See! I now gape at Jupiter himself,
I stare upon Orion and the stars.

Cyclops. Well, is the dinner fitly cooked and laid?

Silenus. All ready, if your throat is ready too.

Cyclops. Are the bowls full of milk besides?

Silenus. O'er-brimming;
So you may drink a tunful if you will.
Cyclops. Is it ewe's milk or cow's milk, or both mixed?—
Silenus. Both, either; only pray don't swallow me.
Cyclops. By no means.——[1]

. . . . . .

What is this crowd I see beside the stalls?
Outlaws or thieves? for near my cavern-home,
I see my young lambs coupled two by two
With willow bands; mixed with my cheeses lie
Their implements; and this old fellow here
Has his bald head broken with stripes.
Silenus. Ah me!
I have been beaten till I burn with fever.
Cyclops. By whom? Who laid his fist upon your head?
Silenus. Those men, because I would not suffer them
To steal your goods.
Cyclops. Did not the rascals know
I am a god, sprung from the race of heaven?
Silenus. I told them so, but they bore off your things,
And ate the cheese in spite of all I said,
And carried out the lambs—and said, moreover,
They'd pin you down with a three-cubit collar,
And pull your vitals out through your one eye,
Torture your back with stripes, then binding you,
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold,
And then deliver you, a slave, to move
Enormous rocks, or found a vestibule.
Cyclops. In truth? Nay, haste, and place in order quickly
The cooking knives, and heap upon the hearth,
And kindle it, a great faggot of wood—
As soon as they are slaughtered, they shall fill
My belly, broiling warm from the live coals,
Or boiled and seethed within the bubbling cauldron.
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game,
Of stags and lions I have gorged enough,
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men.
Silenus. Nay, master, something new is very pleasant
After one thing for ever, and of late
Very few strangers have approached our cave.

[1] "For ye would foot it in my tortured paunch,
And kill me with those antics."—Wodhull.

Ulysses. Hear, Cyclops, a plain tale on the other side.
We, wanting to buy food, came from our ship
Into the neighbourhood of your cave, and here
This old Silenus gave us in exchange
These lambs for wine, the which he took and drank,
And all by mutual compact, without force.
There is no word of truth in what he says,
For slily he was selling all your store.
Silenus. I? May you perish, wretch—
Ulysses. If I speak false!
Silenus. Cyclops, I swear by Neptune who begot thee,
By mighty Triton and by Nereus old,
Calypso and the glaucous ocean Nymphs,
The sacred waves and all the race of fishes—
Be these the witnesses, my dear sweet master,
My darling little Cyclops, that I never
Gave any of your stores to these false strangers;—
If I speak false may those whom most I love,
My children, perish wretchedly!
Chorus. There stop!
I saw him giving these things to the strangers.
If I speak false, then may my father perish,
But do not thou wrong hospitality.
Cyclops. You lie! I swear that he is juster far
Than Rhadamanthus—I trust more in him.
But let me ask, whence have ye sailed, O strangers?
Who are you? And what city nourished ye?
Ulysses. Our race is Ithacan—having destroyed
The town of Troy, the tempests of the sea
Have driven us on thy land, O Polypheme.
Cyclops. What, have ye shared in the unenvied spoil
Of the false Helen, near Scamander's stream?
Ulysses. The same, having endured a woful toil.
Cyclops. Oh, basest expedition! sailed ye not
From Greece to Phrygia for one woman's sake?
Ulysses. 'Twas the gods' work—no mortal was in fault.
But, O great offspring of the ocean-king,
We pray thee and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou dost spare thy friends who visit thee,
And place no impious food within thy jaws.
For in the depths of Greece we have upreared
Temples to thy great father, which are all

His homes. The sacred bay of Tænarus
Remains inviolate, and each dim recess
Scooped high on the Malean promontory,
And airy Sunium's silver-veinèd crag,
Which divine Pallas keeps unprofaned ever,
The Gerastian asylums, and whate'er
Within wide Greece our enterprise has kept
From Phrygian contumely; and in which
You have a common care, for you inhabit
The skirts of Grecian land, under the roots
Of Ætna and its crags, spotted with fire.
Turn then to converse under human laws,
Receive us shipwrecked suppliants, and provide
Food, clothes, and fire, and hospitable gifts;
Nor fixing upon oxen-piercing spits
Our limbs, so fill your belly and your jaws.
Priam's wide land has widowed Greece enough;
And weapon-wingèd murder heaped together
Enough of dead, and wives are husbandless,
And ancient women and gray fathers wail
Their childless age;—if you should roast the rest
And 'tis a bitter feast that you prepare,
Where then would any turn? Yet be persuaded
Forego the lust of your jaw-bone; prefer
Pious humanity to wicked will:
Many have bought too dear their evil joys.

Silenus. Let me advise you, do not spare a morsel
Of all his flesh. If you should eat his tongue
You would become most eloquent, O Cyclops.

Cyclops. Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man's god,
All other things are a pretence and boast.
What are my father's ocean promontories,
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me?
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove's thunderbolt,
I know not that his strength is more than mine.
As to the rest I care not:—When he pours
Rain from above, I have a close pavilion
Under this rock, in which I lie supine,
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously
Emulating the thunder of high heaven.
And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,

I wrap my body in the skins of beasts,
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow whirl on.
The earth, by force, whether it will or no,
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,
Which, to what other god but to myself
And this great belly, first of deities,
Should I be bound to sacrifice? I well know
The wise man's only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,
And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward.
I will not cheat my soul of its delight,
Or hesitate in dining upon you:—
And that I may be quit of all demands,
These are my hospitable gifts;—fierce fire
And yon ancestral cauldron, which o'erbubbling
Shall finely cook your miserable flesh.
Creep in!—[1]

. . . . . .

Ulysses. Ai! ai! I have escaped the Trojan toils,
I have escaped the sea, and now I fall
Under the cruel grasp of one impious man.
O Pallas, mistress, goddess, sprung from Jove,
Now, now, assist me! Mightier toils than Troy
Are these;—I totter on the chasms of peril;—
And thou who inhabitest the thrones
Of the bright stars, look, hospitable Jove,
Upon this outrage of thy deity,
Otherwise be considered as no god!

Chorus (*alone*).

For your gaping gulph, and your gullet wide
The ravin is ready on every side,
The limbs of the strangers are cooked and done,
There is boiled meat, and roast meat, and meat from the coal,
You may chop it, and tear it, and gnash it for fun,
An hairy goat's-skin contains the whole.
Let me but escape, and ferry me o'er
The stream of your wrath to a safer shore.

[1] "Ye shall adorn my table, and produce
Delicious meals to cheer my gloomy cave,
Such as a god can relish."

The Cyclops Ætnean is cruel and bold,
He murders the strangers
That sit on his hearth,
And dreads no avengers
To rise from the earth.
He roasts the men before they are cold,
He snatches them broiling from the coal,
And from the cauldron pulls them whole,
And minces their flesh and gnaws their bone
With his cursèd teeth, till all be gone.
Farewell, foul pavilion:
Farewell, rites of dread!
The Cyclops vermilion,
With slaughter uncloying,
Now feasts on the dead,
In the flesh of strangers joying!

Ulysses. O Jupiter! I saw within the cave
Horrible things; deeds to be feigned in words,
But not to be believed as being done.

Chorus. What! sawest thou the impious Polypheme
Feasting upon your loved companions now?

Ulysses. Selecting two, the plumpest of the crowd,
He grasped them in his hands.—

Chorus. Unhappy man![1]

. . . . . .

Ulysses. Soon as we came into this craggy place,
Kindling a fire, he cast on the broad hearth
The knotty limbs of an enormous oak,
Three waggon-loads at least, and then he strewed
Upon the ground, beside the red firelight,
His couch of pine leaves; and he milked the cows,
And pouring forth the white milk, filled a bowl
Three cubits wide and four in depth, as much
As would contain ten amphoræ, and bound it
With ivy wreaths; then placed upon the fire
A brazen pot to boil, and made red hot
The points of spits, not sharpened with the sickle
But with a fruit tree bough, and with the jaws
Of axes for Ætnean slaughterings.[2]

[1] "*Chorus.* How did you bear, O miserable man,
These cruel outrages?"—Wodhull.

[2] I confess I do not understand this.

And when this god-abandoned cook of hell
Had made all ready, he seized two of us
And killed them in a kind of measured manner;
For he flung one against the brazen rivets
Of the huge cauldron, and seized the other
By the foot's tendon, and knocked out his brains
Upon the sharp edge of the craggy stone:
Then peeled his flesh with a great cooking-knife
And put him down to roast. The other's limbs
He chopped into the cauldron to be boiled.
And I, with the tears raining from my eyes,
Stood near the Cyclops, ministering to him;
The rest, in the recesses of the cave,
Clung to the rock like bats, bloodless with fear.
When he was filled with my companions' flesh,
He threw himself upon the ground and sent
A loathsome exhalation from his maw.
Then a divine thought came to me. I filled
The cup of Maron, and I offered him
To taste, and said:—"Child of the Ocean God,
Behold what drink the vines of Greece produce,
The exultation and the joy of Bacchus."
He, satiated with his unnatural food,
Received it, and at one draught drank it off,
And taking my hand, praised me:—"Thou hast given
A sweet draught after a sweet meal, dear guest."
And I perceiving that it pleased him, filled
Another cup, well knowing that the wine
Would wound him soon and take a sure revenge.
And the charm fascinated him, and I
Plied him cup after cup, until the drink
Had warmed his entrails, and he sang aloud
In concert with my wailing fellow-seamen
A hideous discord—and the cavern rung.
I have stolen out, so that if you will
You may achieve my safety and your own.
But say, do you desire, or not, to fly
This uncompanionable man, and dwell
As was your wont among the Grecian Nymphs
Within the fanes of your belovèd god?
Your father there within agrees to it,
But he is weak and overcome with wine,

And caught as if with bird-lime by the cup,
He claps his wings and crows in doting joy.
You who are young escape with me, and find
Bacchus your ancient friend; unsuited he
To this rude Cyclops.

Chorus. Oh my dearest friend,
That I could see that day, and leave for ever
The impious Cyclops.[1]

. . . . . .

Ulysses. Listen then what a punishment I have
For this fell monster, how secure a flight
From your hard servitude.

Chorus. O sweeter far
Than is the music of an Asian lyre
Would be the news of Polypheme destroyed.

Ulysses. Delighted with the Bacchic drink he goes
To call his brother Cyclops—who inhabit
A village upon Ætna not far off.

Chorus. I understand, catching him when alone
You think by some measure to dispatch him,
Or thrust him from the precipice.

Ulysses. Oh no;
Nothing of that kind; my device is subtle.

Chorus. How then? I heard of old that thou wert wise.

Ulysses. I will dissuade him from this plan, by saying
It were unwise to give the Cyclopses
This precious drink, which if enjoyed alone
Would make life sweeter for a longer time.
When vanquished by the Bacchic power, he sleeps,
There is a trunk of olive wood within,
Whose point having made sharp with this good sword
I will conceal in fire, and when I see
It is alight, will fix it, burning yet,
Within the socket of the Cyclops' eye
And melt it out with fire—as when a man
Turns by its handle a great augur round,
Fitting the framework of a ship with beams,
So will I, in the Cyclops' fiery eye
Turn round the brand and dry the pupil up.

[1] . . . . . "For we long
Have been deprived of the enlivening bowl,
Nor entertain a single hope of freedom."—Wodhull.

Chorus. Joy! I am mad with joy at your device.
Ulysses. And then with you, my friends, and the old man,
We'll load the hollow depth of our black ship,
And row with double strokes from this dread shore.
Chorus. May I, as in libations to a god,
Share in the blinding him with the red brand?
I would have some communion in his death.
Ulysses. Doubtless: the brand is a great brand to hold.
Chorus. Oh! I would lift an hundred waggon-loads,
If like a wasp's nest I could scoop the eye out
Of the detested Cyclops.
Ulysses. Silence now!
Ye know the close device—and when I call,
Look ye obey the masters of the craft.
I will not save myself and leave behind
My comrades in the cave: I might escape,
Having got clear from that obscure recess,
But 'twere unjust to leave in jeopardy
The dear companions who sailed here with me.

Chorus.

Come! who is first, that with his hand
Will urge down the burning brand
Through the lids, and quench and pierce
The Cyclops' eye so fiery fierce?

Semichorus I. (*Song within.*)

Listen! listen! he is coming,
A most hideous discord humming,
Drunken, museless, awkward, yelling,
Far along his rocky dwelling;
Let us with some comic spell
Teach the yet unteachable.
By all means he must be blinded
If my council be but minded.

Semichorus II.

Happy those made odorous
With the dew which sweet grapes weep,
To the village hastening thus,
Seek the vines that soothe to sleep,
Having first embraced thy friend,
There in luxury without end,

With the strings of yellow hair,
Of thy voluptuous leman fair,
Shalt sit playing on a bed!—
Speak what door is openèd?

Cyclops.

Ha! ha! ha! I'm full of wine,
Heavy with the joy divine,
With the young feast oversated,
Like a merchant's vessel freighted
To the water's edge, my crop
Is laden to the gullet's top.
The fresh meadow grass of spring
Tempts me forth thus wandering
To my brothers on the mountains,
Who shall share the wine's sweet fountains.
Bring the cask, O stranger, bring!

Chorus.

One with eyes the fairest
Cometh from his dwelling
Some one loves thee, rarest,
Bright beyond my telling.
In thy grace thou shinest
Like some nymph divinest,
In her caverns dewy:—
All delights pursue thee,
Soon pied flowers, sweet-breathing,
Shall thy head be wreathing.

Ulysses. Listen, O Cyclops, for I am well skilled
In Bacchus, whom I gave thee of to drink.
Cyclops. What sort of god is Bacchus then accounted?
Ulysses. The greatest among men for joy of life.
Cyclops. I gulpt him down with very great delight.
Ulysses. This is a god who never injures men.
Cyclops. How does the god like living in a skin?
Ulysses. He is content wherever he is put.
Cyclops. Gods should not have their body in a skin.
Ulysses. If he gives joy, what is his skin to you?
Cyclops. I hate the skin, but love the wine within.
Ulysses. Stay here, now drink, and make your spirit glad.

Cyclops. Should I not share this liquour with my brothers?
Ulysses. Keep it yourself, and be more honoured so.
Cyclops. I were more useful, giving to my friends.
Ulysses. But village mirth breeds contests, broils, and blows
Cyclops. When I am drunk none shall lay hands on me.—
Ulysses. A drunken man is better within doors.
Cyclops. He is a fool, who drinking, loves not mirth.
Ulysses. But he is wise, who drunk, remains at home.
Cyclops. What shall I do, Silenus? Shall I stay?
Silenus. Stay—for what need have you of pot companions?
Cyclops. Indeed this place is closely carpeted
With flowers and grass.
Silenus. And in the sun-warm noon
'Tis sweet to drink. Lie down beside me now,
Placing your mighty sides upon the ground.
Cyclops. What do you put the cup behind me for?
Silenus. That no one here may touch it.
Cyclops. Thievish one!
You want to drink;—here place it in the midst.
And thou, O stranger, tell how art thou called?
Ulysses. My name is Nobody. What favour now
Shall I receive to praise you at your hands?
Cyclops. I'll feast on you the last of your companions.
Ulysses. You grant your guest a fair reward, O Cyclops.
Cyclops. Ha! what is this? Stealing the wine, you rogue!
Silenus. It was this stranger kissing me because
I looked so beautiful.
Cyclops. You shall repent
For kissing the coy wine that loves you not.
Silenus. By Jupiter! you said that I am fair.
Cyclops. Pour out, and only give me the cup full.
Silenus. How is it mixed? let me observe.
Cyclops. Curse you!
Give it me so.
Silenus. Not till I see you wear
That coronal, and taste the cup to you.
Cyclops. Thou wily traitor!
Silenus. But the wine is sweet.
Ay, you will roar if you are caught in drinking.
Cyclops. See now, my lip is clean and all my beard.

Silenus. Now put your elbow right and drink again.
As you see me drink— . . .[1]
Cyclops. How now?
Silenus. Ye gods, what a delicious gulp!
Cyclops. Guest, take it;—you pour out the wine for me.
Ulysses. The wine is well accustomed to my hand.
Cyclops. Pour out the wine!
Ulysses. I pour; only be silent.
Cyclops. Silence is a hard task to him who drinks.
Ulysses. Take it and drink it off; leave not a dreg.
Oh, that the drinker died with his own draught!
Cyclops. Papai! the vine must be a sapient plant.
Ulysses. If you drink much after a mighty feast,
Moistening your thirsty maw, you will sleep well;
If you leave aught, Bacchus will dry you up.
Cyclops. Ho! ho! I can scarce rise. What pure delight!
The heavens and earth appear to whirl about
Confusedly. I see the throne of Jove
And the clear congregation of the gods.
Now if the Graces tempted me to kiss
I would not, for the loveliest of them all
I would not leave this Ganymede.
Silenus. Polypheme,
I am the Ganymede of Jupiter.
Clyclops. By Jove you are; I bore you off from Dardanus.[2]

. . . . . .

Ulysses and the Chorus.

Ulysses. Come, boys of Bacchus, children of high race,
This man within is folded up in sleep,
And soon will vomit flesh from his fell maw;
The brand under the shed thrusts out its smoke,
No preparation needs, but to burn out
The monster's eye;—but bear yourselves like men.
Chorus. We will have courage like the adamant rock,
All things are ready for you here; go in,

[1] . . . "and imitate
My every gesture."—WODHULL.

[2] [*Exit* CYCLOPS.
Silenus. Ruin awaits me.
Chorus. Dost thou loathe him now?
Silenus. Ah me! I from this sleep shall soon behold
The most accursed effects."—WODHULL.

Before our father shall perceive the noise.

Ulysses. Vulcan, Ætnean king! burn out with fire
The shining eye of this thy neighbouring monster!
And thou, O sleep, nursling of gloomy night,
Descend unmixed on this god-hated beast,
And suffer not Ulysses and his comrades,
Returning from their famous Trojan toils,
To perish by this man, who cares not either
For god or mortal; or I needs must think
That Chance is a supreme divinity,
And things divine are subject to her power.

Chorus.

Soon a crab the throat will seize
Of him who feeds upon his guest,
Fire will burn his lamp-like eye
In revenge of such a feast!
A great oak stump now is lying
In the ashes yet undying.
Come, Maron, come!
Raging let him fix the doom,
Let him tear the eyelid up
Of the Cyclops—that his cup
May be evil!
Oh! I long to dance and revel
With sweet Bromian, long desired,
In loved ivy wreaths attired;
Leaving this abandoned home—
Will the moment ever come?

Ulysses. Be silent, ye wild things! Nay, hold your peace,
And keep your lips quite close; dare not to breathe,
Or spit, or e'en wink, lest ye wake the monster,
Until his eye be tortured out with fire.

Chorus. Nay, we are silent, and we chaw the air.

Ulysses. Come now, and lend a hand to the great stake
Within—it is delightfully red hot.

Chorus. You then command who first should seize the stake
To burn the Cyclops' eye, that all may share
In the great enterprise.

Semi. I. We are too far,
We cannot at this distance from the door
Thrust fire into his eye.

Semi. II. And we just now
Have become lame; cannot move hand or foot.
Chorus. The same thing has occurred to us,—our ankles
Are sprained with standing here, I know not how.
Ulysses. What, sprained with standing still?
Chorus. And there is dust
Or ashes in our eyes, I know not whence.
Ulysses. Cowardly dogs! ye will not aid me then?
Chorus. With pitying my own back and my back bone,
And with not wishing all my teeth knocked out,
This cowardice comes of itself—but stay,
I know a famous Orphic incantation
To make the brand stick of its own accord
Into the skull of this one-eyed son of Earth.
Ulysses. Of old I knew ye thus by nature; now
I know ye better.—I will use the aid
Of my own comrades—yet though weak of hand
Speak cheerfully, that so ye may awaken
The courage of my friends with your blithe words.
Chorus. This I will do with peril of my life,
And blind you with my exhortations, Cyclops.
Hasten and thrust,
And parch up to dust,
The eye of the beast,
Who feeds on his guest.
Burn and blind
The Ætnean hind!
Scoop and draw,
But beware lest he claw
Your limbs near his maw.
Cyclops. Ah me! my eyesight is parched up to cinders.
Chorus. What a sweet pæan! sing me that again!
Cyclops. Ah me! indeed, what woe has fallen upon me!
But wretched nothings, think ye not to flee
Out of this rock; I, standing at the outlet,
Will bar the way and catch you as you pass.
Chorus. What are you roaring out, Cyclops?
Cyclops. I perish!
Chorus. For you are wicked.
Cyclops. And besides miserable.
Chorus. What, did you fall into the fire when drunk?
Cyclops. 'Twas Nobody destroyed me.

Chorus. Why then no one
Can be to blame.
Cyclops. I say 'twas Nobody
Who blinded me.
Chorus. Why then you are not blind.
Cyclops. I wish you were as blind as I am.
Chorus. Nay,
It cannot be that no one made you blind.
Cyclops. You jeer me; where, I ask, is Nobody?
Chorus. Nowhere, O Cyclops.
Cyclops. It was that stranger ruined me:—the wretch
First gave me wine and then burnt out my eye,
For wine is strong and hard to struggle with.
Have they escaped, or are they yet within?
Chorus. They stand under the darkness of the rock
And cling to it.
Cyclops. At my right hand or left?
Chorus. Close on your right.
Cyclops. Where?
Chorus. Near the rock itself.
You have them.
Cyclops. Oh, misfortune on misfortune!
I've cracked my skull.
Chorus. Now they escape you there.
Cyclops. Not there, although you say so.
Chorus. Not on that side.
Cyclops. Where then?
Chorus. They creep about you on your left.
Cyclops. Ah! I am mocked! They jeer me in my ills.
Chorus. Not there! he is a little there beyond you.
Cyclops. Detested wretch! where are you?
Ulysses. Far from you
I keep with care this body of Ulysses.
Cyclops. What do you say? You proffer a new name.
Ulysses. My father named me so; and I have taken
A full revenge for your unnatural feast;
I should have done ill to have burned down Troy
And not revenged the murder of my comrades.
Cyclops. Ai! ai! the ancient oracle is accomplished;
It said that I should have my eyesight blinded
By you coming from Troy, yet it foretold

That you should pay the penalty for this
By wandering long over the homeless sea.

Ulysses. I bid thee weep—consider what I say,
I go towards the shore to drive my ship
To mine own land, o'er the Sicilian wave.

Cyclops. Not so, if whelming you with this huge stone
I can crush you and all your men together;
I will descend upon the shore, though blind,
Groping my way adown the steep ravine.

Chorus. And we, the shipmates of Ulysses now,
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.

HECUBA

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

POLYDORE'S GHOST.
HECUBA.
CHORUS OF CAPTIVE TROJAN DAMES.
POLYXENA.
ULYSSES.
FEMALE ATTENDANT OF HECUBA.
AGAMEMNON.
POLYMESTOR.
TALTHYBIUS.

Scene.—THE THRACIAN CHERSONESUS.

THE GHOST OF POLYDORE.

LEAVING the cavern of the dead, and gates
Of darkness, where from all the gods apart
Dwells Pluto, come I Polydore, the son
Of Hecuba from royal Cisseus sprung,
And Priam, who, when danger threatened Troy,
Fearing his city by the Grecian arms
Would be laid low in dust, from Phrygia's realm
In privacy conveyed me to the house
Of Polymestor, of his Thracian friend,
Who tills the Chersonesus' fruitful soil,
Ruling a nation famed for generous steeds;
But secretly, with me, abundant gold
My father sent, that his surviving children
Might lack no sustenance, if Ilion's walls
Should by the foe be levelled with the ground.
I was the youngest of all Priam's sons,
By stealth he therefore sent me from the realm;
Nor could my feeble arm sustain the shield,
Or launch the javelin; but while yet entire
Each ancient landmark on our frontiers stood,
The turrets of the Phrygian state remained
Unshaken, and my brother Hector's spear
Prospered in battle; nurtured by the man
Of Thrace, my father's friend, I, wretched youth,
Grew like a vigorous scion. But when Troy,
When Hector failed, when my paternal dome

Was from its basis rent, and Priam's self,
My aged father, at the altar bled
Which to the gods his pious hands had reared,
Butchered by curst Achilles' ruthless son;
Me, his unhappy guest, my father's friend
Slew for the sake of gold, and having slain,
Plunged me into the sea, that he might keep
Those treasures in his house. My breathless corse,
In various eddies by the rising waves
Of ocean tost, lies on the craggy shore,
Unwept, unburied. But by filial love
For Hecuba now prompted, I ascend
A disembodied ghost, and thrice have seen
The morning dawn, to Chersonesus land,
Since my unhappy mother came from Troy.
But all the Grecian army, in their ships,
Here anchoring on this coast of Thrace remain
Inactive; for appearing on his tomb
Achilles, Peleus' son, restrained the troops,
Who homeward else had steered their barks, and claims
Polyxena my sister, as a victim
Most precious at his sepulchre to bleed;
And her will he obtain, nor will his friends
Withhold the gift; for fate this day decrees
That she shall die: my mother must behold
Two of her slaughtered children's corses, mine,
And this unhappy maid's—that in a tomb
I may be lodged, where the firm beach resists
The waves, I to her servant will appear,
Since from the powers of hell I have obtained
The privilege of honourable interment,
And that a mother's hand these rites perform:
I shall accomplish what my soul desired.
But on the aged Hecuba's approach,
Far hence must I retreat; for from the tent
Of Agamemnon she comes forth, alarmed
By my pale spectre. O my wretched mother,
How art thou torn from princely roofs to view
This hour of servitude! what sad reverse
Of fortune! some malignant god hath balanced
Thy present misery 'gainst thy former bliss. [*Exit.*

HECUBA, *attended by* TROJAN DAMSELS.

Hecuba. Forth from these doors, ye gentle virgins, lead me
A weak old woman: O ye nymphs of Troy,
Support your fellow-servant, once your queen
Bear me along, uphold my tottering frame.
And take me by this aged hand; your arm
Shall be my staff to lean on, while I strive
My tardy pace to quicken. O ye lightnings
Of Jove, O Night in tenfold darkness wrapt,
By such terrific phantoms from my couch
Why am I scared? Thou venerable earth,
Parent of dreams that flit on raven wing;
The vision I abhor, which I in sleep
This night have seen, relating to my son,
Who here is fostered in the Thracian realm
And to Polyxena my dearest daughter;
For I too clearly saw and understood
The meaning of that dreadful apparition;
Ye tutelary gods of this domain,
Preserve the only anchor of our house,
My son, who dwells in Thracian fields, o'erspread
With snow, protected by his father's friend.
Some fresh event awaits us, and ere long
By accents most unwelcome shall the ear
Of wretchedness be wounded: till this hour,
By such incessant horrors, such alarms,
My soul was never seized. Where shall I view
The soul of Helenus, on whom the god
Bestowed prophetic gifts, ye Phrygian maids?
Where my Cassandra to unfold the dream?
With bloody fangs I saw a wolf, who slew
A dappled hind, which forcibly he tore
From these reluctant arms, and what increased
My fears, was this—Achilles' spectre stalked
Upon the summit of his tomb, and claimed
A gift, some miserable Trojan captive.
You therefore I implore, ye gods, avert
Such doom from my loved daughter.

CHORUS, HECUBA.

Chorus. I to thee,
To thee, O Hecuba, with breathless speed,

Fly from the tents of our imperious lords,
Where I by lot have been assigned, and doomed
To be a slave, driven by the pointed spear
From Troy; by their victorious arms the Greeks
Have made me captive: nothing can I bring,
Thy sorrows to alleviate; but to thee
Laden with heaviest tidings am I come
The herald of affliction. For 'tis said,
Greece in full council hath resolved thy daughter
A victim to Achilles shall be given.
The warrior mounting on his tomb, thou know'st,
Appeared in golden armour, and restrained
The fleet just ready to unfurl its sails,
Exclaiming, "Whither would ye steer your course,
Ye Greeks, and leave no offering on my grave?"
A storm of violent contention rose,
And two opinions in the martial synod
Of Greece went forth; the victim, some maintained,
Ought on the sepulchre to bleed, and some
Such offering disapproved. But Agamemnon,
Who shares the bed of the Prophetic Dame,
Espoused thy interest; while the sons of Theseus,
Branches from the Athenian root, discussed
The question largely in each point of view,
But in the same opinion both concurred,
And said that never should Cassandra's love
To great Achilles' valour be preferred:
Equally balanced the debate still hung,
When he, that crafty orator, endued
With sweetest voice, the favourite of the crowd,
Laertes' son, persuaded all the host,
Not to reject the first of Grecian chiefs,
And yield the preference to a victim slave:
Lest some vindictive ghost, before the throne
Of Proserpine arising, might relate
How Greece, unmindful of her generous sons,
Who nobly perished for their native land,
From Ilion's fields departed. In a moment
Ulysses will come hither, from thy breast
And aged arms to drag the tender maid.
But to the temples, to the altars, go,
In suppliant posture clasp Atrides' knees,

Invoke the gods of heaven and hell beneath,
For either thou wilt by thy prayers avert
Thy daughter's fate, else must thou at the tomb
Behold the virgin fall distained with gore,
And gushing from her neck a crimson stream.

Hecuba. Wretch that I am! ah me! what clamorous sounds,
What words, what plaints, what dirges shall I find,
Expressive of the anguish which I feel?
Oppress by miserable old age, bowed down
Under a load of servitude too heavy
To be endured: what sanctuary remains,
What valiant race, what city will protect me?
The hoary Priam is no more, my sons
Are now no more. Or to this path, or that,
Shall I direct my steps? or whither go?
Where shall I find some tutelary god?
Ye Phrygian captives, messengers of ill,
O ye who with unwelcome tidings fraught,
Come hither, ye have ruined me. The orb
Of day shall never rise to fill this breast
With any comfort more. Ye luckless feet,
Bear an infirm old woman to the tent
Of our captivity. Come forth, my daughter,
Come forth and listen to thy mother's voice,
That thou may'st know the rumour I have heard,
In which thy life is interested.

POLYXENA, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Polyx. O mother,
What mean you by those shrieks? what fresh event
Proclaiming, from my chamber, like a bird,
Have you constrained me, urged by fear, to speed
My flight?

Hecuba. Ah, daughter!

Polyx. With foreboding voice,
Why do you call me? these are evil omens.

Hecuba. Alas! thy life, Polyxena.

Polyx. Speak out,
Nor aggravate the horrors yet untold
By long suspense. I fear, O mother, much
I fear. What mean those oft repeated groans?

Hecuba. Thou child of a most miserable mother!

Polyx. Why speak you thus?
Hecuba. The Greeks, with one consent,
Resolve that on the tomb of Peleus' son
Thou shalt be sacrificed.
Polyx. What boundless woes
Are these which to your daughter you announce!
Yet, O my mother, with the tale proceed.
Hecuba. Of a most horrible report I speak,
Which says, that, by the suffrage of the Greeks,
It is resolved to take away thy life.
Polyx. O, my unhappy mother, doomed to suffer
Wrongs the most dreadful, doomed to lead a life
Of utter wretchedness: what grievous curse,
Such as no language can express, on you
Hath some malignant demon hurled! no more
Can I, your daughter, share the galling yoke
Of servitude with your forlorn old age;
For like some lion's whelp, or heifer bred
Upon the mountains, hurried from your arms
Shall you behold me, and with severed head
Consigned to Pluto's subterraneous realms
Of darkness, there among the silent dead,
Wretch that I am, shall I be laid. These tears
Of bitter lamentation I for you,
For you, O mother, shed; but my own life
I heed not, nor the shame, nor fatal stroke,
For I in death a happier lot obtain.
Chorus. To thee, O Hecuba, with hasty step
Behold Ulysses some new message brings.

Ulysses, Hecuba, Polyxena, Chorus.

Ulysses. Though I presume the counsels of our troops
And their decision are already known
To thee, O woman, yet must I repeat
Th' unwelcome tidings; at Achilles' tomb,
Polyxena, thy daughter, have the Greeks
Resolved to slay; me to attend the virgin
Have they commanded: but Achilles' son
Is at the altar destined to preside,
And be the priest. Know'st thou thy duty then?
Constrain us not to drag her from those arms
With violence, nor strive with me; but learn

The force of thy inevitable woes:
For there is wisdom, e'en when we are wretched,
In following reason's dictates.

Hecuba. Now, alas!
It seems a dreadful struggle is at hand,
With groans abounding and unnumbered tears.
I died not at the time I ought to die,
Neither did Jove destroy me; he still spares
My life, that I may view fresh woes, yet greater,
Wretch that I am, than all my former woes.
But if a slave, who not with bitter taunt,
Or keen reproach, her questions doth propose,
Might speak to freemen, now 'tis time for you
To cease, and give me audience while I ask——

Ulysses. Allowed, proceed; for I without reluctance
Will grant thee time.

Hecuba. Remember you when erst
You came to Troy a spy, in tattered garb
Disguised, and from your eyes upon your beard
Fell tears extorted by the dread of death?

Ulysses. I well remember: for by that event
My inmost heart was touched.

Hecuba. But Helen knew you,
And told me only.

Ulysses. I can ne'er forget
Into what danger I was fallen.

Hecuba. My knees
You in a lowly posture did embrace.

Ulysses. And to thy garment clung with faltering hand.

Hecuba. At length I saved and from our land dismissed you.

Ulysses. Hence I the solar beams yet view.

Hecuba. What language
Did you then hold, when subject to my power?

Ulysses. Full many were the words which I devised
To save my life.

Hecuba. Doth not your guilt appear
From your own counsels? Though your tongue avows
The generous treatment you from me received
No benefit on me do you confer,
But strive to harm me. O ungrateful race
Of men, who aim at popular applause
By your smooth speeches; would to Heaven I ne'er

Had known you, for ye heed not how ye wound
Your friends, whene'er ye can say ought to win
The crowd. But what pretence could they devise
For sentencing this virgin to be slain?
Are they constrained by fate, with human victims,
To drench the tomb on which they rather ought
To sacrifice the steer? or doth Achilles
Demand her life with justice, to retaliate
Slaughter on them who slaughtered? But to him
Hath she done nought injurious. He should claim
Helen as victim at his tomb, for she
His ruin caused by leading him to Troy.
If it was needful that some chosen captive
Distinguished by transcendent charms should die,
We were not meant; for the perfidious daughter
Of Tyndarus is most beauteous, and her crimes
To ours at least are equal. Justice only
In this debate supports me: hear how large
The debt which 'tis your duty to repay
On my petition: you confess you touched
My hand, and these my aged cheeks, in dust
Grovelling a suppliant; yours I now embrace,
From you the kindness which I erst bestowed
Again implore, and sue to you: O tear not
My daughter from these arms, nor slay the maid:
Sufficient is the number of the slain.
In her I yet rejoice, in her forget
My woes; she, for the loss of many children,
Consoles me, I in her a country find,
A nurse, a staff, a guide. The mighty ought not
To issue lawless mandates, nor should they,
On whom propitious fortunes now attend,
Think that their triumphs will for ever last:
For I was happy once, but am no more,
My bliss all vanished in a single day.
Yet, O my friend, revere and pity me,
Go to the Grecian host, admonish them
How horrible an action 'twere to slay
These captive women whom at first ye spared,
And pitied when ye dragged them from the altars.
For by your laws 'tis equally forbidden
To spill the blood of freemen, or of slave.

Although you weakly argue, will your rank
Convince them : for the self-same speech when, uttered
By the ignoble, and men well esteemed,
Comes not with equal force.

Chorus. The human soul
Is not so flinty as to hear the woes
And plaintive strains thou lengthen'st out, nor shed
The sympathizing tear.

Ulysses. To me attend,
O Hecuba, nor through resentment deem
That from a foe such counsels can proceed :
I am disposed to save thee, and now hold
No other language : but will not deny
What I to all have said ; since Troy is taken,
On the first warrior of the host who asks
A victim, should thy daughter be bestowed.
The cause why many cities are diseased
Is this : the brave and generous man obtains
No honourable distinction to exalt him
Above the coward. But from us, O woman,
Achilles claims such homage, who for Greece
Died nobly. Is not this a foul reproach,
If, while our friends yet live, we seek their aid,
But after death ungratefully forget
Past services? Should armed bands once more
Assemble, and renew the bloody strife,
Will not some hardy veteran thus exclaim :
"Shall we go forth to battle, or indulge
The love of life, now we have seen the dead
Obtain no honours?" While from day to day
I live, though I have little, yet that little
For every needful purpose will suffice.
But may conspicuous trophies o'er my grave
Be planted, for such tribute to my name
Will last to after-ages. If thou call
Thy sufferings piteous, hear what in reply
We have to urge ; amidst the Grecian camp
Are many aged dames, as miserable
As thou art, with full many a hoary sire,
And weeping bride, torn from her valiant lord
O'er whose remains hath Ida's dust been strewn.
Support thy woes : if with mistaken zeal

We have resolved to honour the deceased,
Our crime is ignorance: but ye barbarians
Pay no distinction to your friends, no homage
To the illustrious dead; hence Greece prevails;
But ye from your pernicious counsels reap
The bitter fruits they merit.

Chorus. Ah, what ills
Ever attend the captive state, subdued
By brutal violence, and forced t' endure
Unseemly wrongs.

Hecuba. Those words I vainly spoke
Thy slaughter to avert, in air were lavished;
But, O my daughter, if thy power exceed
Thy mother's, like the nightingale send forth
Each warbled note, to save thy life, excite,
By falling at his knees, Ulysses' pity,
And on this ground, because he too hath children,
Entreat him to compassionate thy doom.

Polyx. I see thee, O Ulysses, thy right hand
Beneath thy robe concealing, see thee turn
Thy face away, lest I should touch thy beard.
Be of good cheer; I'll not call down the wrath
Of Jove who guards the suppliant, but will follow
Thy steps, because necessity ordains
And 'tis my wish to die; if I were loth,
I should appear to be an abject woman,
And fond of life; but what could lengthened life
Avail to me, whose father erst was lord
Of the whole Phrygian realm? Thus first I drew
My breath beneath the roofs of regal domes;
Then was I nurtured with the flattering hope
That I should wed a monarch, and arrive
At the proud mansion of some happy youth.
Ill-fated princess, thus I stood conspicuous
Amid the dames and brightest nymphs of Troy,
In all but immortality a goddess;
But now am I a slave, and the first cause
Which makes me wish to die, is that abhorred
Unwonted name; else some inhuman lord
With gold perchance might purchase me, the sister
Of Hector, and full many a valiant chief,

Might make me knead the bread, and sweep the floor,
And ply the loom, and pass my abject days
In bitterness of woe: some servile mate
Might bring dishonour to my bed, though erst
I was deemed worthy of a sceptred king:
Not thus. These eyes shall to the last behold
The light of freedom. O ye shades receive
A princess. Lead me on then, O Ulysses,
And as thou lead'st despatch me, for no hope,
No ground for thinking, I shall e'er be happy,
Can I discern: yet hinder not by word
Or deed the steadfast purpose I have formed;
But, O my mother, in this wish concur
With me, that I may die ere I endure
Such wrongs as suit not my exalted rank.
For whosoe'er hath not been used to taste
Of sorrow, bears indeed the galling yoke,
Yet is he grieved, when he to such constraint
Submits his neck: but they who die may find
A bliss beyond the living; for to live
Ignobly were the utmost pitch of shame.

Chorus. A great distinction, and among mankind
The most conspicuous, is to spring from sires
Renowned for virtue; generous souls hence raise
To heights sublimer an ennobled name.

Hecuba. Thou, O my daughter, well indeed hast spoken;
Yet these exalted sentiments of thine
To me will cause fresh grief; but, if the son
Of Peleus must be gratified, and Greece
Avoid reproach, Ulysses, slay not her,
But me, conducting to Achilles' tomb,
Transpierce with unrelenting hand. I bore
Paris, whose shafts the son of Thetis slew.

Ulysses. Not thee for victim, O thou aged dame,
But her, Achilles' spectre hath demanded.

Hecuba. Yet slay me with my daughter; so shall earth,
And the deceased who claims these hateful rites,
A twofold portion drink of human gore.

Ulysses. Enough in her of victims; let no more
Be added: would to Heaven we were not bound
To offer up this one!

Hecuba. The dread behests

Of absolute necessity require,
That with my daughter I should die.
Ulysses. What mean'st thou?
I know no lord to counteract my will.
Hecuba. Her, as the ivy clings around the oak,
Will I embrace.
Ulysses. Not if to wiser counsels
Thou yield just deference.
Hecuba. I will ne'er consent
My daughter to release.
Ulysses. Nor will I go,
And leave her here.
Polyx. Attend to me, my mother,
And, O thou offspring of Laertes, treat
The just emotions of parental wrath
With greater mildness. But, O hapless woman,
Contend not with our conquerors. Would you fall
Upon the earth and wound your aged limbs,
Thrust from me forcibly, by youthful arms
Torn with disgrace away? Provoke not wrongs
Unseemly; O, my dearest mother, give
That much-loved hand, and let me join my cheek
To yours; for I no longer shall behold
The radiant orb of yonder sun. Now take
A last farewell, O you who gave me birth;
I to the shades descend.
Hecuba. But I the light
Am doomed to view, and still remain a slave.
Polyx. Unwedded, reft of promised bridal joys.
Hecuba. Thou, O my daughter, claim'st the pitying tear;
But I am a most miserable woman.
Polyx. There shall I sleep among the realms beneath,
From you secluded.
Hecuba. What resource, alas!
For me, the wretched Hecuba is left?
Where shall I finish this detested life?
Polyx. Born free, I die a slave.
Hecuba. I too, bereft
Of all my children.
Polyx. What commands to Hector,
Or to your aged husband, shall I bear?
Hecuba. Tell them I of all women am most wretched.

Polyx. Ye paps which sweetly nourished me——
Hecuba. Alas!
My child's untimely miserable fate.
Polyx. Farewell, my mother, and my dear Cassandra
Hecuba. To others in that language speak; be theirs
The happiness thy mother cannot taste.
Polyx. And thou, my brother Polydore, who dwell'st
Among the Thracians, famed for generous steeds ——
Hecuba. If yet he live; but this I greatly doubt,
Because I am in all respects so wretched.
Polyx. He lives, and when the hour of death is come,
Will close your eyes.
Hecuba. I'm prematurely dead
While yet alive, bowed down to earth by woe.
Polyx. Now bear me hence, Ulysses, o'er my face
Casting a veil: for ere I at the altar
Am slain, this heart is melted by the plaints
Of my dear mother, and my tears augment
Her sorrows. O thou radiant light; for still
Am I permitted to invoke thy name,
But can enjoy thee only till I meet
The lifted sword, and reach Achilles' tomb.
[*Exeunt* Ulysses *and* Polyxena.
Hecuba. I faint, my limbs are all unnerved; return,
My daughter, let me touch that hand once more,
Leave me not childless. O, my friends, I perish,
Ah, would to Heaven I could see Spartan Helen,
In the same state, that sister to the sons
Of Jove, for by her beauteous eyes was Troy,
That prosperous city, with disgrace o'erthrown.

Chorus.

ODE.

I. 1.

Ye breezes, who the ships convey,
That long becalmed at anchor lay,
Nor dared to quit the strand;
As the swift keel divides the wave,
Say whither am I borne a slave,
Ordained to tread the Doric land,
Or Phthia, where beset with reeds,

Apidanus, the sire of limpid rills,
Winding a-down the channelled hills,
Waters the fruitful meads?

I. 2.

Or to that isle, with dashing oar
Impelled, shall I my woes deplore,
And on the sacred earth,
Where first the palm and laurel rose,
Memorials of Latona's throes,
Which to the twins divine gave birth,
Teach the harmonious strain to flow;
With Delos' nymphs Diana's praise resound,
Her hair with golden fillet bound,
And never-erring bow?

II. 1.

Or, pent in some Athenian tower,
Devoted to Minerva's power,
On the robe's tissued ground
While, shadowed by my needle, spread
Expressive forms, in vivid thread,
Picture the goddess whirling round
Her chariot with unrivalled speed;
Or represent the Titan's impious crew,
Whom Jove's red lightnings overthrew,
Those monsters doomed to bleed?

II. 2.

Alas! my sons, a valiant band,
My fathers, and my native land,
Ye shared the general fate.
Sacked by the Greeks, Troy's bulwarks smoke,
But I, constrained to bear the yoke,
Shall soon behold some foreign state,
To ignominious bondage led;
And leaving vanquished Asia Europe's slave,
Debarred an honourable grave,
Ascend the victor's bed.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Talthy. Where, O ye Phrygian damsels, shall I find
The wretched Hecuba, who erst was queen
Of Ilion?

Chorus. Prostrate near you on the ground,
Wrapt in her mantle, there she lies.
Talthy. Great Jove!
What shall I say? that thou from Heaven look'st down
Upon mankind, or have they rashly formed
A vain opinion, deeming that the race
Of gods exist, though fortune governs all?
Ha! was not this the queen of wealthy Phrygia,
And was not she the happy Priam's wife?
But her whole city by the hostile spear
Is now destroyed, while she a slave, bowed down
By age, and childless, stretched upon the ground,
Defiles with dust her miserable head.
Old as I am, yet gladly would I die
Rather than sink into abhorred disgrace.
Arise, unhappy woman, O lift up
That feeble body, and that hoary head.
Hecuba. Away! O suffer this decrepit frame
To rest. Why move me! Whosoe'er thou art,
What mean'st thou? why dost thou molest th' afflicted?
Talthy. Talthybius: me, the herald of the Greeks,
O woman, Agamemnon hath despatched
To fetch you.
Hecuba. Com'st thou, by the Greeks ordained,
My friend, to slay me also at the tomb?
How welcome were such tidings; let us go,
With speed conduct me thither.
Talthy. To inter
Your daughter, I invite you; both the sons
Of Atreus, and the assembled Grecian host,
Have sent me for that purpose.
Hecuba. Ah! what say'st thou?
Thou com'st not to inform me I must die,
But to unfold the most disastrous tidings.
Then art thou lost, my daughter, from the arms
Of thy fond mother torn; of thee, my child
Am I bereft. But how did ye destroy her,
Respectfully, or with the ruthless hand
Of hostile rage? Speak, though it wound my soul.
Talthy. A second time, in pity to your daughter,
You make me weep; for now while I relate
Her sufferings, tears bedew these swimming eyes,

Such as I shed when at the tomb she perished.
To view the sacrifice the Grecian host
Were all assembled: taking by the hand
Polyxena, on the sepulchral hillock
Achilles' son then placed her: I drew near,
Attended by the chosen youths of Greece,
To hold the tender victim, and prevent
Her struggles. But Achilles' son, uplifting
With both his hands a cup of massive gold,
Poured forth libations to his breathless sire;
And gave a sign to me, through the whole camp
Strict silence to proclaim. I in the midst
Stood up and cried: "Be mute, ye Greeks, let none
Presume to speak, observe a general silence."
The troops obeyed, and through their crowded ranks
Not e'en a breath was heard, while in these words
The chief expressed his purpose: "Son of Peleus,
My father, the propitiatory drops
Of these libations which invite the dead
Accept; O come and quaff the crimson blood
Of this pure virgin, whom to thee all Greece
And I devote; be thou benign, O grant us
Securely to weigh anchor, to unbind
Our halsers, and on all of us bestow
A happy voyage to our native land
From vanquished Troy." He ceased, and in his prayer
Joined the whole army, when the chief unsheathed
His golden-hilted sword, and gave a sign
To chosen youths of Greece to hold the virgin,
Which she perceived, and in these words addressed
The warriors: "O ye Argives, who laid waste
My city, willingly I die, let no man
Confine these arms, I with undaunted breast
Will meet the stroke. I by the gods conjure you
Release, and slay me as my rank demands
Like one born free; for I from mighty kings
Descend, and in the shades beneath should blush
To be accounted an ignoble slave."
Through all the host ran murmurs of assent,
And royal Agamemnon bade the youths
Release the virgin; they their monarch's voice,

Soon as they heard, obeyed; our lord's behests
The princess too revering, from her shoulder
Down to her waist rent off the purple robe,
Displayed her bosom like some statue formed
In exquisite proportion, and to earth
Bending her knee, in these affecting words
Expressed herself: "If at my breast thou aim
The wound, strike here; if at my neck, that neck
Is ready bared." Half willing, and half loth,
Through pity for the maid, he with keen steel
Severed the arteries; streams of blood gushed forth:
Yet even thus, though at her latest gasp,
She showed a strong solicitude to fall
With decency, while stood the gazing host
Around her: soon as through the ghastly wound
Her soul had issued, every Greek was busied
In various labours; o'er the corse some strewed
The verdant foliage, others reared a pyre
With trunks of fir: but he who nothing brought,
From him who with funereal ornament
Was laden, heard these taunts: "O slothful wretch,
Bear'st thou no robe, no garland, hast thou nought
To give in honour of this generous maid?"
Such their encomiums on thy breathless daughter.
You, of all women, who in such a child
Were happiest, now most wretched I behold.

Chorus. Fate, the behests of the immortal gods
Accomplishing, with tenfold weight hath caused
This dreadful curse to fall on Priam's house,
And on our city.

Hecuba. 'Midst unnumbered ills
I know not, O my daughter, whither first
To turn my eyes, for if on one I touch,
Another hinders me, and I again,
By a long train of woes succeeding woes,
To some fresh object am from thence called off;
Nor can I from my tortured soul efface
The grief thy fate occasions; yet the tale
Of thy exalted courage checks my groans,
Which else had been immoderate. No just cause
Have we for wonder, if the barren land
Cheered by Heaven's influence, with benignant suns

Yields plenteous harvests, while a richer soil
Deprived of every necessary aid
Bears weeds alone. But 'midst the human race
The wicked man is uniformly wicked,
The good still virtuous, nor doth evil fortune
Corrupt his soul; the same unsullied worth
He still retains. Is this great difference owing
To birth, or education? We are taught
What virtue is, by being nurtured well,
And he who thoroughly hath learnt this lesson,
Guided by the unerring rule of right,
Can thence discern what's base.—My soul in vain
Hath hazarded these incoherent thoughts.
But, O Talthybius, to the Greeks repair,
And strict injunctions give, that no man touch
My daughter's corse, but let the gazing crowd
Be driven away. For in a numerous host
Its multitudes break loose from all restraints,
The outrages of mariners exceed
Devouring flame, and whosoe'er abstains
From mischief, by his comrades is despised.
But, O my aged servant, take and dip
That urn in ocean's waves, and hither bring,
Filled with its water, that the last sad rites
To my departed daughter I may pay,
And lave the corse of that unwedded bride,
Of that affianced virgin: but alas!
Whence with such costly gifts as she deserves,
Her tomb can I adorn? My present state
Affords them not, but what it doth afford
Will I bestow, and from the captive dames
Appointed to attend me, who reside
Within these tents, some ornaments collect,
If, unobserved by their new masters, aught
They have secreted. O ye splendid domes,
Ye palaces once happy, which contained
All that was rich and fair; O Priam thou
The sire, and I who was the aged mother
Of an illustrious race, how are we dwindled
To nothing, stripped of all our ancient pride!
Yet do we glory, some in mansions stored
With gold abundant, others when distinguished

Among the citizens by sounding titles.
Vain are the schemes which with incessant care
We frame, and all our boastful words are vain.
The happiest man is he who, by no ill
O'ertaken, passes through life's fleeting day.
[*Exit* HECUBA.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

By Heaven was my devoted head
Menaced with impending ill,
What time the pines, whose branches spread
Their tutelary shade o'er Ida's hill,
Were laid by Phrygian Paris low,
That his adventurous bark might stem the tide,
From Sparta's coast to waft the fairest bride
On whom the solar beams their golden radiance throw.

II.

Surrounding labours were at hand
Leagued with the behests of fate;
Then did such madness seize the land,
As called down vengeance from a foreign state,
The royal swain with dazzled eyes
Gave that decree, the source of all our woes,
When from three rival goddesses he chose
Bright Venus, and pronounced that she deserved the prize.

III.

The spear and death hence raged around,
Hence were my mansions levelled with the ground;
Staining with tears Eurotas' tide,
Too deeply grieved to share the victor's pride,
The Spartan virgin too in vain
Bewails her favoured youth untimely slain,
While, sprinkling ashes o'er their vest
And hoary head, the matrons bend
O'er their sons' urns; their groans to Heaven ascend,
They tear their cheeks, and beat their miserable breast.

ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

Attend. Where is the wretched Hecuba, my friends,
Who in her woes surpasses all, or male,
Or of the female race? her none can rob
Of her just claim, pre-eminence in grief.
Chorus. With the harsh sounds of that ill-boding tongue,
O wretch, what mean'st thou? wilt thou never cease
To be th' unwelcome herald of affliction?
Attend. Most grievous are the tidings which I bring
To Hecuba, nor easy were the task
In words auspicious to make known to mortals
Such dire calamities.
Chorus. From her apartment
She seasonably comes forth to give thee audience.

HECUBA, ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

Attend. O most unfortunate, whose woes exceed
All that the power of language can express,
My queen, you perish, doomed no more to view
The blessed light; of children, husband, city,
Bereft and ruined.
Hecuba. Nothing hast thou told
But what I knew, thou only com'st t' insult me:
Yet wherefore dost thou bring to me this corse
Of my Polyxena, o'er whom 'twas said
The Grecian host with pious zeal all vied
To heap a tomb?
Attend. She knows not, but laments
For the deceased Polyxena alone,
And to her recent woes is yet a stranger.
Hecuba. Ah, bring'st thou the inspired prophetic head,
And the dishevelled tresses of Cassandra?
Attend. You speak of one yet living, but bewail not
This the deceased: survey the naked corse
Of him whose death to you will seem most strange
And most unlooked for.
Hecuba. Ha, I see my son,
My dearest Polydore, whom he of Thrace
Beneath his roof protected. I am ruined;
Now utterly I perish. O my son,
For thee, for thee I wake the frantic dirge,
By that malignant demon which assumed

St. Joseph Convent
School

Thy voice, thy semblance, recently apprized
Of this calamity.

Attend. O wretched mother,
Know you then what was your son's fate?

Hecuba. A sight
Incredible and new to me is that
Which I behold: for from my former woes
Spring woes in long succession, and the day
When I shall cease to weep, shall cease to groan,
Will never come.

Chorus. The woes which we endure
Alas! are dreadful.

Hecuba. O my son, thou son
Of an ill-fated mother, by what death
Didst thou expire? through what disastrous cause
Here liest thou prostrate? ah, what bloody hand—

Attend. I know not: on the shore his corse I found.

Hecuba. Cast up by the impetuous waves, or pierced
With murderous spear?

Attend. The surges of the deep
Had thrown it on the sand.

Hecuba. Alas! too well
I comprehend the meaning of the dream
Which to these eyes appeared: the spectre borne
On sable pinions no illusion proved,
When, O my son, thee, thee it represented
No longer dwelling in the realms of light.

Chorus. Instructed by that vision, canst thou name
The murderer?

Hecuba. 'Twas my friend, the Thracian king,
With whom in secrecy his aged sire
Had placed him.

Chorus. Ha! what mean'st thou? to possess
That gold by slaying him?

Hecuba. O, 'twas a deed
Unutterable, a deed without a name,
Surpassing all astonishment, unholy,
And not to be endured. Where now the laws
Of hospitality? Accursed man,
How cruelly hast thou with reeking sword
Transpierced this unresisting boy, nor heard
The gentle voice of pity!

Chorus. Hapless queen,
How hath some demon, thy malignant foe,
Rendered thee of all mortals the most wretched:
But I behold great Agamemnon come,
And therefore, O my friends, let us be silent

AGAMEMNON, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Agam. Whence this delay? why go you not t' inter,
O Hecuba, your daughter, whom Talthybius
Directed that no Greek might be allowed
To touch? We therefore have with your request
Complied, nor moved the corse. But you remain
Inactive, which I wonder at, and come
To fetch you, for each previous solemn rite
That best might please, if aught such rites can please,
Have we performed. But ah, what Trojan youth
Do I behold lie breathless in the tent?
For that he was no Greek, the garb informs me
In which he's clad.

Hecuba. Thou wretch, for of myself
I speak, when thee, O Hecuba, I name;
What shall I do, at Agamemnon's knees
Fall prostrate, or in silence bear my woes?

Agam. Why weep, with face averted, yet refuse
T' inform me what hath happened? who is he?

Hecuba. But from his knees, if, deeming me a slave
And enemy, the monarch should repel me,
This would but make my sorrows yet more poignant.

Agam. I am no seer, nor can I uninformed
Trace out the secret purpose of your soul.

Hecuba. Am I mistaken then, while I suppose
A foe in him who doth not mean me ill?

Agam. If 'tis your wish I should not be apprized,
We both are of one mind; you will not speak,
And I as little am disposed to hear.

Hecuba. Without his aid no vengeance for my child
Can I obtain: yet why deliberate thus?
Prosper or fail I must take courage now.
O royal Agamemnon, by those knees
A suppliant I conjure you, by that beard,
And that right hand, victorious o'er your foes.

Agam. What do you wish for? To obtain your freedom?
This were not difficult.
Hecuba. No, give me vengeance
On yonder guilty wretch, and I am willing
To linger out the remnant of my life
In servitude.
Agam. Then why implore our aid?
Hecuba. For reasons you suspect not. Do you see
That breathless corse o'er which my tears I shed?
Agam. The corse I see; but cannot comprehend
What follows next.
Hecuba. Him erst I bore and nurtured.
Agam. Is the deceased, O miserable dame,
One of your children?
Hecuba. Not of those who fell
Beneath Troy's walls.
Agam. What! had you other sons?
Hecuba. Yes, him you see, born in an evil hour.
Agam. But where was he when Ilion was destroyed?
Hecuba. His father, apprehensive of his death,
Conveyed him thence.
Agam. From all the other children
Which then he had, where placed he this apart?
Hecuba. In this same region where his corse was found
Agam. With Polymestor, sovereign of the land?
Hecuba. He, to preserve that execrable gold,
Was hither sent.
Agam. But, by what ruthless hand,
And how, was he despatched?
Hecuba. By whom beside?
The murderer was his friend, the Thracian king.
Agam. Was he thus eager? O abandoned wretch,
To seize the gold!
Hecuba. E'en thus; soon as he knew
Troy was o'erthrown.
Agam. But where did you discover
The body, or who brought it?
Hecuba. On the shore
This servant found it.
Agam. Or in quest of him
Or other task then busied?

Hecuba. To fetch water
To lave Polyxena's remains she went.
Agam. When he had slain him, it appears, his friend
Did cast him forth.
Hecuba. He to the waves consigned
The stripling's mangled corse.
Agam. O wretched woman,
Surrounded by immeasurable woes.
Hecuba. I am undone; no farther ill remains
For me t' experience.
Agam. Ah! what woman e'er
Was born to such calamities?
Hecuba. Not one
Exists, whose sorrows equal mine, unless
You of Calamity herself would speak.
Yet hear the motive why I clasp your knees.
If I appear to merit what I suffer,
I must be patient; but if not, avenge
My wrongs upon the man who 'gainst his guest
Such treachery could commit, who, nor the gods
Of Erebus beneath, nor those who rule
In Heaven above regarding, this vile deed,
Did perpetrate, e'en he with whom I oft
Partook the feast, on whom I showered each bounty,
Esteeming him the first of all my friends;
Yet, when at Ilion's palace with respect
He had been treated, a deliberate scheme
Of murder forming, he destroyed my son,
On whom he deigned not to bestow a tomb,
But threw his corse into the briny deep.
Though I indeed am feeble, and a slave,
Yet mighty are the gods, and by their law
The world is ruled: for by that law we learn
That there are gods, and can mark out the bounds
Of justice and injustice; if such law
To you transmitted, be infringed, if they
Who kill their guests, or dare with impious hand
To violate the altars of the gods,
Unpunished 'scape, no equity is left
Among mankind. Deeming such base connivance
Unworthy of yourself, revere my woes,
Have pity on me, like a painter take

Your stand to view me, and observe the number
Of my afflictions; once was I a queen,
But now am I a slave; in many a son
I once was rich, but now am I both old
And of my children reft, without a city,
Forlorn, and of all mortals the most wretched.
But whither would you go? With you I seem
To have no interest. Miserable me!
Why do we mortals by assiduous toil,
And such a painful search as their importance
Makes requisite, all other arts attain,
Yet not enough intent on the due knowledge
Of that sole empress of the human soul
Persuasion, no rewards bestow on those
Who teach us by insinuating words
How to procure our wishes? who can trust
Hereafter in prosperity? That band
Of my heroic sons is now no more,
Myself a captive, am led forth to tasks
Unseemly, and e'en now these eyes behold
The air obscured by Ilion's rising smoke.
It might be vain perhaps, were I to found
A claim to your assistance on your love:
Yet must I speak: my daughter, who in Troy
Was called Cassandra, the prophetic dame,
Partakes your bed; and how those rapturous nights
Will you acknowledge, or to her how show
Your gratitude for all the fond embraces
Which she bestows, O king, or in her stead
To me her mother? In the soul of man
Th' endearments of the night, by darkness veiled,
Create the strongest interest. To my tale
Now listen: do you see that breathless corse?
Each act of kindness which to him is shown,
Upon a kinsman of the dame you love
Will be conferred. But, in one point my speech
Is yet deficient. By the wondrous arts
Of Dædalus, or some benignant god,
Could I give voice to each arm, hand, and hair,
And each extremest joint, they round your knees
Should cling together, and together weep,
At once combining with a thousand tongues.

O monarch, O thou light of Greece, comply,
And stretch forth that avenging arm to aid
An aged woman, though she be a thing
Of nought, O succour: for the good man's duty
Is to obey the dread behests of justice,
And ever punish those who act amiss.

Chorus. 'Tis wonderful, indeed, how all events
Happen to mortals, and the dread behests
Of fate, uncircumscribed by human laws,
Constrain us to form amities with those
To whom the most inveterate hate we bore,
And into foes convert our former friends.

Agam. To you, O Hecuba, your son, your fortunes,
And your entreaties, is my pity due.
I in obedience to the gods and justice
Wish to avenge you on this impious friend,
Could I appear your interests to espouse,
Without the troops suspecting that I slay
The Thracian monarch for Cassandra's sake:
My terrors hence arise; the host esteem
Him our ally, and the deceased a foe:
What though you held him dear, his fate, the loss
Of you alone, affects not the whole camp.
Reflect too, that you find me well disposed
To share your toils, and in your cause exert
My utmost vigour; but, what makes me slow,
Is a well-grounded fear of blame from Greece.

Hecuba. Alas! there's no man free: for some are slaves
To gold, to fortune others, and the rest,
The multitude or written laws restrain
From acting as their better judgment dictates.
But since you are alarmed, and to the rabble
Yield an implicit deference, from that fear
I will release you; only to my schemes
Be privy, if some mischief I contrive
Against the murderer of my son: but take
No active part. If, when the Thracian suffers,
As he shall suffer, 'mongst the Greeks a tumult
Break forth, or they attempt to succour him,
Restrain them, without seeming to befriend
My interests. As for what remains, rely
On me, and I will manage all things well.

Agam. How then? what mean you? With that aged hand
To wield a sword, and take away the life
Of that barbarian, or by drugs endued
With magic power? the help you need, what arts
Can furnish? what strong arm have you to fight
Your battles? whence will you procure allies?
Hecuba. These tents conceal a group of Trojan dames.
Agam. Mean you those captives whom the Greeks have seized.
Hecuba. With them I on the murderer will inflict
Due punishment.
Agam. How can the female sex
O'er men obtain a conquest?
Hecuba. Numbers strike
A foe with terror, and the wiles of women
Are hard to be withstood.
Agam. They may strike terror,
But in their courage I no trust can place.
Hecuba. What? did not women slay Ægyptus' sons,
And in their rage exterminate each male
From Lemnos? But leave me to find out means
How to effect my purpose. Through the camp
In safety this my faithful servant send;
And thou, when to my Thracian friend thou com'st,
Say, "Hecuba, erst Queen of Troy, invites
Thee and thy children, on thy own account,
No less than hers, because she to thy sons
And thee the self-same message must deliver."
The newly slain Polyxena's interment
Defer, O Agamemnon; in one flame
That when their kindred corses are consumed;
The brother with the sister, who demand
A twofold portion of their mother's grief
Together may be buried in one grave.
Agam. These rites shall be performed, which could the troops
Set sail, I needs must have denied: but now,
Since Neptune sends not an auspicious breeze,
Expecting a more seasonable voyage,
Here must we wait. But may success attend you;
For 'tis the common interest of mankind,

Of every individual, every state,
That he who hath transgressed should suffer ill,
And fortune crown the efforts of the virtuous.
[*Exit* AGAMEMNON.

CHORUS.

I. 1.

No more, O Troy, thy dreaded name
Conspicuous in the lists of fame,
'Midst fortresses impregnable shall stand,
In such thick clouds an armed host
Pours terrors from the Grecian coast,
And wastes thy vanquished land:
Shorn from thy rampired brow the crown
Of turrets fell; thy palaces o'erspread
With smoke lie waste, no more I tread
Thy wonted streets, my native town.

I. 2.

I perished at the midnight hour,
When, aided by the banquet's power,
Sleep o'er my eyes his earliest influence shed;
Retiring from the choral song,
The sacrifice and festive throng,
Stretched on the downy bed
The bridegroom indolently lay,
His massive spear suspended on the beam,
No more he saw the helmets gleam,
Or nautic troops in dread array.

II. 1.

While me the golden mirror's aid,
My flowing tresses taught to braid
In graceful ringlets with a fillet bound,
Just as I cast my robe aside,
And sought the couch; extending wide
Through every street this sound
Was heard; "O when, ye sons of Greece,
This nest of robbers levelled with the plain,
Will ye behold your homes again?
When shall these tedious labours cease?"

II. 2.

Then from my couch up starting, drest
Like Spartan nymph in zoneless vest,
At Dian's shrine an ineffectual prayer
Did I address; for hither led,
First having viewed my husband dead,
Full oft I in despair,
As the proud vessel sailed from land,
Looked back, and saw my native walls laid low,
Then fainting with excess of woe
At length lost sight of Ilion's strand.

III.

Helen that sister to the sons of Jove,
And Paris Ida's swain,
With my curses still pursuing,
For to them I owe my ruin,
Me they from my country drove,
Never to return again,
By that detested spousal rite
On which Hymen never smiled,
No, 'twas some demon who with lewd delight
Their frantic souls beguiled:
Her may ocean's waves no more
Waft to her paternal shore.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Polym. For thee, O Priam, my unhappy friend,
And you, my dearest Hecuba, I weep,
Beholding your distress, your city taken,
Your daughter newly slain: alas! there's nought
To be relied on; fame is insecure,
Nor can the prosperous their enjoyments guard
Against a change of Fortune, for the gods
Backward and forward turn her wavering wheel,
And introduce confusion in the world,
That we, because we know not will happen,
May worship them. But of what use are plaints
Which have no virtue to remove our woes?
If you my absence censure, be appeased,
For in the midst of Thracia's wide domains

I from these coasts was distant at the time
Of your arrival: soon as I returned,
When from the palace I was issuing forth,
This your attendant met me, and delivered
The message, hearing which, I hither came.

Hecuba. O Polymestor, wretched as I am,
I blush to see thy face; because thou erst
In happier days didst know me, I with shame
Appear before thee in my present fortunes.
Nor can I look at thee with steadfast eyes:
But this thou wilt not deem to be a mark
Of enmity: the cause of such behaviour
Is only custom, which forbids our sex
To gaze on men.

Polym. No wonder you thus act
Under such circumstances. But what need
Have you of me, and wherefore did you send
To fetch me from the palace?

Hecuba. I in private
A secret of importance would disclose
To thee and to thy children. From these tents
Give orders for thy followers to depart.

Polym. [*to his attendants who retire*].
Withdraw; this solitary spot is safe.
For you and the confederate Grecian host
Are all attached to me. But 'tis incumbent
On you t' inform me what my prosperous fortunes
Can yield to succour my unhappy friends!
For this is what I wish to do.

Hecuba. Say first,
If he, my son, whom this maternal hand
And his fond father in thy mansions placed,
My Polydore, yet live. I'll then pursue
My questions.

Polym. Yes, in him you still are blest.

Hecuba. How kind, how worthy of thyself that speech,
My dearest friend!

Polym. What farther would you know?

Hecuba. If haply yet the youth remember aught
Of me his mother.

Polym. Much he wished to come
And visit you in private.

Hecuba. Is the gold
He brought from Troy preserved?
Polym. I keep it safe
In my own palace.
Hecuba. Keep it if thou wilt:
But covet nor the treasures of thy friends.
Polym. I do not covet them; my utmost wish
Is to enjoy, O woman, what I have.
Hecuba. Know'st thou then, what to thee and to thy sons
I want to say?
Polym. I know not; till in words
Your thoughts are signified.
Hecuba. Bestow such love
On Polydore as thou receiv'st from me.
Polym. What is it that to me and to my children
You would disclose?
Hecuba. The spot, where deep in earth,
The ancient treasures of all Priam's house
Lie buried.
Polym. Is this secret what you wish
Should to your son be mentioned?
Hecuba. Yes, by thee,
Because thou art a virtuous man!
Polym. But wherefore
Did you require these children should be present?
Hecuba. For them to know the secret, if thou die,
Will be of great advantage.
Polym. You have spoken
Well and discreetly.
Hecuba. Know'st thou where at Troy
Minerva's temple stands?
Polym. Is the gold there?
But by what mark shall I the spot distinguish?
Hecuba. Above the surface rises a black stone.
Polym. Will you describe the place yet more minutely?
Hecuba. The gold I in thy custody would place,
Which I from Ilion hither bring.
Polym. Where is it?
Concealed beneath your garment?
Hecuba. 'Midst a heap
Of spoils laid up within yon tents.

Polym. Where mean you?
These are the Grecian mariners' abode.
Hecuba. In separate dwellings have they placed the captives?
Polym. But how can we rely upon the faith
Of those within? doth no man thither come?
Hecuba. There's not a Greek within; we are alone:
But enter thou these doors: for now the host,
Impatient to weigh anchor, would return
From Ilion to their homes. Thou with thy children
T' accomplish all the dread behests of fate,
Shalt thither go where thou hast lodged my son.
[*Exeunt* HECUBA *and* POLYMESTOR.

Chorus. Thou hast not yet received the blow,
But justice sure will lay thee low.
Like him who headlong from on high
Falls when no friendly haven's nigh,
Into the ocean's stormy wave,
Here shalt thou find a certain grave:
For twofold ruin doth impend
O'er him who human laws pursue,
And righteous gods indignant view:
Thee shall the hope of gain mislead,
Which prompts thee to advance with speed,
And Pluto's loathed abode descend:
Soon shalt thou press th' ensanguined strand,
Slain by a woman's feeble hand.

Polym. [*within*]. Ah me, the light that visited these eyes
Is darkened.
Semi. Heard ye, O my friends, the shriek
Of yonder Thracian?
Polym. [*within*]. Yet again, alas,
My children's foul and execrable murder!
Semi. My friends, some recent mischief hath within
Been perpetrated.
Polym. [*within*]. Though your feet are swift,
Ye shalt not 'scape, for through the walls I'll burst
My passage.
Semi. With a forceful hand, behold
He brandishes the javelin. Shall we rush
To seize him? This important crisis bids us
Assist our queen and Phrygia's valiant dames.
Hecuba. Now do thy worst, and from their hinges rend

Yon massive gates; no more canst thou impart
To those lost eyes their visual orbs, nor see
Thy sons, whom I have slain, to life restored.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

Chorus. Hast thou, my honoured mistress, caught the Thracian,
Over this treacherous friend hast thou prevailed,
And all thy threats accomplished?

Hecuba. Ye shall see him
Before the tent, without delay, deprived
Of sight, advancing with unsteady foot,
And the two breathless corses of his sons,
Whom I, assisted by the noblest matrons
Of Troy, have slain. Th' atonement he hath paid
To my revenge, is just. But now behold
He issues forth: I will retire and shun
The Thracian chief's unconquerable rage.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Polym. Ah, whither am I going? wretched me!
Where am I? what supports me? With these hands
Groping my way like some four-footed beast,
How shall I turn me, to the right or left,
That I those murderous Phrygian dames may seize
Who have destroyed me? Impious and accurst
Daughters of Ilion, in what dark recess
Do they escape me? Would to heaven, O Sun,
Thou to these bleeding eyeballs could'st afford
A cure, that thou my blindness could'st remove.
But hush, I hear those women's cautious tread.
How shall I leap upon them? with their flesh
How shall I glut my rage, and for a feast
To hungry tigers cast their mangled bones,
In just requital of the horrid wrongs,
Which I from them, ah wretched me, have suffered?
But whither, by what impulse am I borne,
Leaving the corses of my sons exposed
To hellish Bacchanalians, as they lie
Torn by the dogs, and on the mountain's ridge
Cast forth unburied! Where shall I stand still?
Or whither shall I go? Like some proud bark

Towed into harbour, which contracts its sails;
I to that fatal chamber which contains
The corses of my murdered sons rush onward
With speed involuntary.

Chorus. Hapless man,
How art thou visited by woes too grievous
To be endured! but by dread Jove thy foe,
On him whose deeds are base, it is ordained
That the severest punishments await.

Polym. Rouse, O ye Thracians, armed with ponderous spears,
Arrayed in mail, for generous steeds renowned,
A hardy race, whom Mars himself inspires.
To you, O Grecian troops, and both the sons
Of Atreus, I with clamorous voice appeal:
Come hither, I implore you by the gods.
Do any of you hear me? Is there none
Who will assist? Why loiter ye? Those women,
Those captives have destroyed me. Horrid wrongs
Have I endured; ah me, the foul reproach!
But whither shall I turn, or whither go?
Through the aërial regions shall I wing
My swift career to that sublime abode
Where Sirius or Orion from his eyes
Darts radiant flames? or, to perdition doomed,
Shall I descend to Pluto's sable flood?

Chorus. He merits pardon, whosoe'er assailed
By ills too grievous to be borne, shakes off
The loathed encumbrance of a wretched life.

AGAMEMNON, POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Agam. Hearing thy shrieks I came. For Echo, child
Of craggy mountains, in no gentle note
Wafted those sounds tumultuous through the host,
Had we not known that by the Grecian spear
The towers of vanquished Phrygia are o'erthrown,
Such uproar would have caused no small alarm.

Polym. My dearest friend, soon as I heard your voice,
I instantly perceived 'twas Agamemnon.
See you my sufferings?

Agam. Wretched Polymestor!
Who hath destroyed thee? who bereaved of sight

Thy bleeding orbs, and those thy children slew?
Whoe'er the author of such deeds, his rage
Was dreadful sure 'gainst thee and 'gainst thy sons.

Polym. With the assistance of those captive dames,
Me Hecuba hath murdered, more than murdered.

Agam. What mean'st thou? Are you guilty of the crime
With which he charges you? and have you dared
To perpetrate an action thus audacious?

Polym. Ah me! what said you? Is she near at hand?
Inform me where to find, that I may seize her,
And scatter wide to all the fowls of heaven
Her mangled corse.

Agam. Ha! what is thy design?

Polym. Allow me, I conjure you by the gods,
To grasp her with this frantic arm.

Agam. Desist,
And casting forth all rancour from thy heart,
Now plead thy cause; that, hearing both apart,
I with unbiassed justice may decide,
If thou these sufferings merit'st.

Polym. I will speak.
There was one Polydore, the youngest son
Of those whom Hecuba to Priam bore;
Him erst removing from the Phrygian realm,
His sire to me consigned, that in my palace
He might be nurtured, when that hoary king
The fall of Troy suspected: him I slew:
But hear my motives for the deed, to prove
How justly and how prudently I acted.
Your enemy, that boy, if he survived
The ruin of his country, might, I feared,
Collect the scattered citizens of Troy,
And there again reside. I also feared,
That when the Greeks knew one of Priam's line
Was living, with a second fleet invading
The shores of Phrygia, they again might drain
Of their inhabitants their Thracian fields,
Involving us, their neighbours, in the vengeance
They on their foes at Ilion wreak. To us
Already hath such neighbourhood, O king,
Proved baneful. But, apprized of her son's fate,
Hecuba drew me hither, on pretence

She would inform me where in massive gold
The hidden treasures of old Priam's race
Beneath Troy's ruins were secured. Alone,
She with my children brought me to this tent,
That none beside might know. With bended knee,
While on a couch I sat, some on my left,
And others on my right, as with a friend,
Full many of the Trojan damsels took
Their places, holding up against the sun
My robe, the woof of an Edonian loom:
Some feigned t' admire it, others viewed my spear,
And stripped me of them both. From hand to hand
The matrons, seeming to caress my children,
Removed them far from their unhappy sire:
And after their fond speeches, in an instant,
(Could you believe it?) snatching up the swords,
Which they beneath their garments had concealed,
They stabbed my sons, whom while I strove to aid,
In hostile guise their comrades held my arms
And feet: if I looked up, they by the hair
Confined me; if I moved my hands, my struggles
Proved ineffectual, through the numerous band
Of women who assailed me, and to close
The scene of my calamity, accomplished
A deed with more than common horror fraught,
For they tore out my bleeding eyes, and fled.
But, like a tiger starting up, I chased
These ruthless fiends, and with a hunter's speed
Each wall examined, dashing to the ground,
And breaking what I seized. These cruel wrongs,
While I your interests study to maintain,
O Agamemnon, and despatch your foe,
Have I endured. To spare a long harangue,
The whole of what 'gainst woman hath been said
By those of ancient times, is saying now,
Or shall be said hereafter, in few words
Will I comprise; nor ocean's waves, nor earth,
Nurture so vile a race, as he who most
Hath with the sex conversed, but knows too well.

Chorus. Curb that audacious virulence of speech,
Nor, by thy woes embittered, thus revile
All womankind; the number of our sex

Is great, and some there are, whom as a mark
To envy, their distinguished worth holds forth,
Though some are justly numbered with the wicked.

Hecuba. O Agamemnon, never ought the tongue
To have a greater influence o'er mankind
Than actions; but whoever hath done well,
Ought to speak well; and he, whose deeds are base,
To use unseemly language, nor find means
By specious words to colour o'er injustice.
Full wise indeed are they to whom such art
Is most familiar: but to stand the test
Of time not wise enough; for they all perish,
Not one of them e'er 'scapes. These previous thoughts
To you, O mighty king, have I addressed.
But now to him I turn, and will refute
The fallacies he uttered. What pretence
Hast thou for saying, that to free the Greeks
From such a second war, and for the sake
Of Agamemnon, thou didst slay my son?
For first, O villain, the barbarian race
With Greece, nor will, nor ever can be friends.
What interest roused thy zeal? Didst thou expect
To form a nuptial union? Wert thou moved
By kindred ties, or any secret cause?
Greece with a fleet forsooth would have returned
To lay thy country waste. Who, canst thou think,
Will credit such assertions? If the truth
Thou wilt confess, gold and thy thirst of gain
Were my son's murderers. Why, when Troy yet flourished,
Why, when the city was on every side
Fenced by strong bulwarks, why, when Priam lived,
And Hector wielded a victorious spear,
Didst thou not, if thou hadst designed to act
In Agamemnon's favour, at the time
When thou didst nurture my unhappy son,
And in thy palace shelter, either slay,
Or to the Greeks surrender up the youth
A living prisoner? But when Ilion's light
Was utterly extinguished, when the smoke
Declared the city subject to our foes,
The stranger thou didst murder, at thy hearth

Who sought protection. To confirm thy guilt,
Now hear this farther charge: if thou to Greece
Hadst been a friend indeed, thou should'st have given
The gold thou say'st thou keep'st, not for thine own,
But Agamemnon's sake, among the troops
Who suffer want, and from their native land
Have for a tedious season been detained.
But thou from those rapacious hands e'en now
Canst not endure to part with it, but hoard'st it
Still buried in thy coffers: as became thee,
Hadst thou trained up my son, hadst thou to him
Been a protector, great is the renown
Thou would'st have gained; for in distress the good
Are steadfast; but our prosperous fortunes swarm
With friends unbidden. Hadst thou been in want,
And Polydore abounded, a sure treasure
To thee would he have proved: but now no longer
In him hast thou a friend; thou of thy gold
Hast lost th' enjoyment, thou thy sons hast lost,
And art thyself thus wretched. But to you,
O Agamemnon, now again I speak:
If you assist him, you will seem corrupt;
For you will benefit a man devoid
Of honour, justice, piety, or truth;
It might be said that you delight in evil;
But, I presume not to reproach my lords.

Chorus. How doth a virtuous cause inspire the tongue
With virtuous language!

Agam. On a stranger's woes
Reluctant I pronounce, but am constrained;
For shame attends the man who takes in hand
Some great affair, and leaves it undecided.
Know then, to me thou seem'st not to have slain
Thy guest through an attachment to my cause,
Nor yet to that of Greece, but that his gold
Thou might'st retain: though in this wretched state
Thou speak to serve thy interests. Among you
Perhaps the murder of your guests seems light;
We Greeks esteem it base. If I acquit thee
How shall I 'scape reproach? Indeed I cannot:
Since thou hast dared to perpetrate the crime,
Endure the consequence.

Polym. Too plain it seems,
Ah me! that, vanquished by a female slave,
Here shall I perish by ignoble hands.
Hecuba. Is not this just for the atrocious deed
Which thou hast wrought?
Polym. My children, wretched me!
And these quenched orbs.
Hecuba. Griev'st thou, yet think'st thou not
That I lament my son?
Polym. Malignant woman,
Do you rejoice in taunting my distress?
Hecuba. In such revenge have not I cause for joy?
Polym. Yet not so hastily, when ocean's wave——
Hecuba. Shall in a bark convey me to the shores
Of Greece?
Polym. Shall whelm you in its vast abyss
Fall'n from the shrouds.
Hecuba. Raised thither by what impulse?
Polym. Up the tall mast you with swift foot shall climb.
Hecuba. On feathered pinions borne, or how?
Polym. With form
Canine endued, and eyeballs glaring fire.
Hecuba. Whence didst thou learn that I such wondrous change
Shall undergo?
Polym. Bacchus, the Thracian seer,
Gave this response.
Hecuba. To thee did he unfold
Nought of the grievous sufferings thou endur'st?
Polym. Then could you ne'er have caught me by your wiles.
Hecuba. But on this change of being, after death,
Or while I yet am living, shall I enter?
Polym. After your death, and men shall call your tomb——
Hecuba. By my new form, or what is it thou mean'st?
Polym. The sepulchre of that vile brute, an object
Conspicuous to the mariner.
Hecuba. I care not;
My vengeance is complete.
Polym. Cassandra too,
Your daughter, must inevitably bleed.
Hecuba. Abomination! On thy guilty head
These curses I retort

Polym. Her shall the wife
Of Agamemnon slay, who sternly guards
His royal mansion.
Hecuba. Such a frantic deed
As this may Tyndarus' daughter ne'er commit!
Polym. She next uplifting the remorseless axe
Shall smite her lord.
Agam. Ha! madman, dost thou court
Thy ruin?
Polym. Slay me; for the murderous bath
Awaits you, when to Argos you return.
Agam. Will ye not drag him from my sight by force?
Polym. Hear you with grief what I announce?
Agam. My followers,
Why stop ye not the miscreant's boding mouth?
Polym. This mouth be closed for ever: I have spoken.
Agam. Will ye not cast him with the utmost speed
Upon some desert island, since he dares
To speak with such licentiousness? Depart,
O wretched Hecuba, and both those corses
Deposit in the grave. But, as for you,
Ye to your lord's pavilions must repair,
O Phrygian dames: for I perceive the gales
Rising to waft us homeward; may success
Attend the voyage to our native land!
And in our mansions may we find all well,
Freed from these dangers!
Chorus. To the haven go,
And to the tents, my friends, t' endure the toils
Our lords impose; for thus harsh fate enjoins.

THE TROJAN DAMES

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

Neptune.	Andromache.
Minerva.	Helena.
Hecuba.	Menelaus.
Cassandra.	Talthybius.

Chorus of Trojan Dames.

Neptune.

From the vast depths of the Ægean sea,
Where many a maze with graceful-moving feet
Unwinds the choir of Nereids, Neptune comes.
For from the time when Phœbus and myself
Raised on this land the rampired towers of Troy
With exact skill, my mind hath never lost
Its fondness for this city of the Phrygians,
Which now in ruins by the arms of Greece
Smokes on the ground: for by Minerva's art
Epëus of Parnassian Phocis framed
A horse, whose hollow womb was full of arms,
And sent within the walls th' enormous bulk
Big with destruction; hence in after times
It shall be called "The Horse of Spears," the spear
In its dark sides concealed. The sacred groves
Are desolate, the temples of the gods
Flooded with gore, and Priam at the steps
Ascending to the shrine of guardian Jove
Hath fall'n and died: much gold, and Phrygian spoils
Are to the Grecian vessels borne; the troops
Expect the fav'ring gale to breathe from shore,
That after ten long years, which they have passed
In arms to lay this city low, with joy
They may behold their children and their wives.
But I, by Argive Juno, mighty queen,
O'erpowered, and Pallas, whose united force
Hath crushed the Phrygians, quit the once famed towers

Of Ilium, and my altars: for when once
Wide through a city desolation spreads,
The hallowed rites, the worship of the gods
Must be neglected. Now with loud laments
Of captive dames to their new lords assigned
Scamander's banks resound: th' Arcadian some,
Some the Thessalian bands, and some the sons
Of Theseus, chiefs of Athens, as decides
The lot, obtain. Beneath this roof are those
Of Troy's unhappy daughters by no lot
Disposed, but to the leaders of the host
Selected; these among, by righteous doom
A captive led, the Spartan Helena.
And Hecuba, if any wish to see
Her and her wretched state, before the gates
Lies stretched, and pours an ample flood of tears;
And she hath ample cause, for at the tomb
Raised to Achilles hath her daughter died,
How piteously! the poor Polyxena;
Priam is fall'n, her sons are fall'n; and her,
Cassandra, whom the royal Phœbus gave
To rove a virgin, and declare the fates,
To secret nuptials Agamemnon leads
Perforce, religion and the gods despised.
But, O my town once flourishing, once crowned
With beauteous-structured battlements, farewell!
Had not Minerva sunk thee in the dust,
On thy firm base e'en now thou mightst have stood

NEPTUNE, MINERVA.

Minerva. Is it permitted me, all former thoughts
Of variance laid aside, t' address a god
Nearest by lineage to my sire allied,
Of mighty power, and honoured by the gods?
Neptune. It is permitted thee: for kindred blood,
Royal Minerva, hath a potent charm
To reconcile the alienated mind.
Minerva. Thy gentleness in anger claims my praise.
What I would offer, king, imports us both.
Neptune. Hast thou of new aught from the gods to speak,
From Jove, or other of the heavenly powers?

Minerva. No: for the sake of Troy I to thy power
Am come, to use it in one common cause.
Neptune. Dost thou, thy former hostile thoughts appeased,
Pity its ruins blazing in the flames?
Minerva. First speak to this: wilt thou with joint design,
Joint labour, aid in what I wish to do?
Neptune. Most willingly: but wish to know thy purpose,
If to the Trojans friendly, or to Greece.
Minerva. The Trojans hated once, would I delight,
To th' Argive host embittering their return.
Neptune. Why have thy measures this quick change, in love
Or hate, whiche'er betides, too violent?
Minerva. Me knowst thou not how outraged, and my shrine?
Neptune. I know: Cassandra Ajax dragged by force.
Minerva. Nor punished by the Grecians, nor reproved.
Neptune. Yet by thy power these Grecians wasted Troy.
Minerva. Therefore with thee I now would work them woe.
Neptune. Thy purpose finds me prompt: what wouldst thou do?
Minerva. With rig'rous vengeance sadden their return.
Neptune. On land, or when they plough the briny wave?
Minerva. When o'er the deep they steer their course for Greece,
The stormy rain, the fierce-descending hail,
And the dark fury of tempestuous winds
My sire will send: to me, his word is passed,
His fiery thunder will he give, to hurl
Against the Grecians, and with lightning flames
To burn their ships. Do thou, for thine the power,
With foaming billows vast and whirling gulfs
Tempest the vexed Ægean; with their dead
Fill the Eubœan bay: that they may learn
Henceforth with reverence to approach my shrines,
And pay due honours to the other gods.
Neptune. It shall be so: few words this favour needs.
With tempests will I chafe th' Ægean sea;
The shores of Mycone, the Delian rocks,
Scyrus, and Lemnus, and the rugged brow
Of steep Caphareus shall with numerous dead
Be covered. But to high Olympus go,
The bolts of thunder from thy father's hands
Receive: then wait till they unmoor their fleet.

Unwise is he, whoe'er of mortals storms
Beleaguered towns, and crushed in ruins wastes
The temples of the gods, the hallowed tombs
Where sleep the dead; for he shall perish soon.
Hecuba. Rise, thou unhappy; from the cold ground raise
Thy head, thy neck. This is no longer Troy,
In Troy we rule no longer. Ah the change
Of fortune! Bear the change; sail with the tide.
With fortune sail, nor turn the prow of life
Against the wave, nor struggle with thy fate.—
Oh woe, woe, woe! Why is it not allowed
A wretch like me to moan my country lost,
My children, and my husband! Thou high boast
Of noble ancestry, how art thou shrunk,
How vanished! What shall I in silence hold?
Or what not hold in silence? What bewail?
In what a woful state are these poor limbs
Reclined, how ill on this hard bed now stretched?
Ah me, my head! Ah me, my temples! Ah,
My sides! O how I long to change my place,
To roll, and roll, and shift from side to side,
Proofs of the restless torture of my mind!
E'en here th' unhappy have a Muse, to give
These woes a voice, far other than the notes
To joy and dance attuned. Ye wingéd barks,
Which through the purple seas and sheltered bays
Of Greece, whilst to the inauspicious sound
Of flutes and oaten pipes your oars kept time,
With all your streamers flying, proudly sailed
To sacred Ilium, to the ports of Troy
Bringing the hated wife of Menelaus,
A foul disgrace to Castor, and a stain
Dishonouring Eurotas. She hath slain
Priam, the reverend sire of fifty children,
And in this gulf of misery hath plunged
The wretched Hecuba. My seat is now—
Ah, what a seat!—at Agamemnon's tent;
And I am led, in my old age am led
A captive from my house, of its hoar hairs,
Sad argument of grief, this head despoiled.
But, O ye wretched wives of Trojans once
Valiant in war, ye virgins, and ye brides

Torn from your loves, Troy smokes: let us lament;
And, as the parent bird that o'er her young
Swells her shrill notes, I will begin the strain,
Not such as in my happier days I raised,
Leaning on Priam's sceptre, when my foot
In Phrygian measures, by the Graces taught,
Led to th' immortal gods the festive dance.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

Chorus. Why, Hecuba, these cries, these cries of woe?
Why dost thou raise these loud laments? I hear
The wailings, which thou utterest, o'er these roofs
Resound; and terror strikes each Trojan dame,
That in this tent bemoans her slavery.

Hecuba. O children, in the vessels of the Greeks
The hand now grasps the oar. O wretched me,
What will they do? Will they with spreading sails
Far from my country bear my hapless age?

Chorus. I know not; but my mind presages ill.
Alas, alas, distracted with our woes,
Soon we shall hear, "Ye Trojan dames, come forth.
The Grecians are preparing their return."

Hecuba. Ah, send not now the mad Cassandra to me,
That shame to Greece: her ravings to my woe
Would add fresh woe. O Troy, unhappy Troy,
Thou art no more. Unhappy they who leave thee,
Unhappy are the living and the slain.

Chorus. Ah me! With trembling foot I leave the tent
Of Agamemnon, from thee, queen, to learn
Whether the sentence of the Greeks be passed
To kill me, wretched me; or in the ships
The sailors are prepared to plough the main.

Hecuba. Early, my child, my soul with terror struck,
Was I brought hither; from the Grecians now
A herald comes informing me to whom
I am assigned—ah wretched me!—a slave.

Chorus. Soon will thy lot be cast.

Hecuba. Ah me! Ah me!

Chorus. Me, miserable me, what Argive leads,
Or who of Phthia's vales, or of the isles
Encircled by the ocean, far from Troy?

Hecuba. To whom am I, unhappy, in what land

Assigned a slave, useless, worn out with age,
The wretched form of one that is no more,
A lifeless image on a monument?
To keep their gates will they assign my charge?
Or on their children shall my office be
T' attend, at Troy with royal honours graced?

Chorus. Ah, with what plaints thy miseries dost thou scan?

Hecuba. No more these hands in the Idæan looms
The shuttle with alternate cast shall throw:
No more my children's sportive youth I see;
Nor, as in youth, shall I to lighter toils
Be destined, or approach some Grecian's bed:
The night itself and fortune cheerless frowns.
But at Pirene's fount shall be my task,
My wretched task, to draw its sacred streams.

Chorus. Oh, to that happy country might we come,
O'er which th' illustrious Theseus held his reign!

Hecuba. But never to Therapnæ, hated town
Of Helen, seated where Eurotas whirls
His eddying stream; exposed my servile state
To Menelaus, who wasted sacred Troy.
The lovely tract, through which Penëus flows,
Delightful base, from which his awful height
Olympus rears, in wealth, so fame reports,
Abounds, and boasts its blooming fruitfulness.
This, next the honoured and divine domains
Where Theseus reigned, would be most pleasing to me.
Much have I heard of the Ætnæan coast
Sacred to Vulcan, to the Punic shore
That rises opposite, the mighty mother
Of the Sicilian mountains, where the wreath
Blooms ever fresh; and of the neighbouring land,
Sweet habitation in th' Ionian sea,
Irriguous with the beauteous-flowing stream
Of Crathis, which the yellow tresses gilds,
And blessings from its sacred fountains pours
Through a rich land, that boasts a generous race.

Chorus. But from the Grecian host a herald comes,
Fraught with fresh tidings: hasty is his step.
What brings he? what announces? For in truth
We of the Dorian land e'en now are slaves.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Talthy. Thou, Hecuba, hast seen Talthybius oft
In Troy, a herald from the Grecian host
In frequent intercourse: but now to thee.
In past time not unknown, I come, and bring
The public mandate, which concerns you all.
Hecuba. This, this, my friends, ye dames of Troy, long since
This was my fear.
Talthy. You are by lot assigned,
If this was what you feared.
Hecuba. Alas, alas!
To what Thessalian, or what Phthian town,
Or to Cadmæan Thebes? I pray thee tell me.
Talthy. Singly to single chiefs are you allotted,
And not together all.
Hecuba. To whom, to whom
Am I appointed, say. What happy fate
Awaits each Trojan dame?
Talthy. I can inform thee:
But singly ask of each, not all at once.
Hecuba. The poor Cassandra, my unhappy daughter,
Where falls her lot?
Talthy. Her, a selected prize,
The royal Agamemnon hath received.
Hecuba. What! For his Spartan spouse a slave? Ah me!
Talthy. No: but in secret to the nuptial bed.
Hecuba. The virgin of Apollo, whom the god
Radiant with golden locks allowed to live
In her pure vow of maiden chastity!
Talthy. With love the raptured virgin smote his heart.
Hecuba. Cast from thee, O my daughter, cast away
Thy sacred wand, rend off the honoured wreaths,
The splendid ornaments that grace thy brows.
Talthy. Is it not great to share a monarch's bed?
Hecuba. But where is she, whom late you took from me,
Where is my daughter?
Talthy. Of Polyxena,
Or of whom else is this inquiry made?
Hecuba. To whom is she allotted?
Talthy. At the tomb
Raised to Achilles it is hers to serve.
Hecuba. Unhappy me! Have I brought forth a child

Doomed at a tomb to serve? But tell me, friend,
What custom or what rite of Greece is this?

Talthy. Pronounce her happy: all with her is well.

Hecuba. What mean thy words? Views she the sun's bright beams?

Talthy. Her doth fate hold from every ill released.

Hecuba. What of Andromache, the wretched wife
Of helméd Hector? Tell me what her fate?

Talthy. Her without lot Achilles' son receives.

Hecuba. And I, whose age-enfeebled limbs require
A staff, to whom am I assigned a slave?

Talthy. Thee hath Ulysses, king of Ithaca,
By lot obtained: to him thou art a slave.

Hecuba. Ah, let me beat this head, and rend these cheeks.
O miserable me! I am enslaved
To a detested, an insidious foe,
A creeping viper, who with baleful bite
Impoisons justice; one, whose double tongue
With glozing arguments from side to side
All things perverts, and turns to hostile hate
What was before most friendly. Mourn for me,
Ye Trojan dames, for I am wretched, sunk
To the most abject fortune, woe is me,
Totally sunk by this ill-fated lot.

Chorus. Thy fortune, venerable queen, I know;
But mine what Argive or what Greek commands?

Talthy. Go, ye attendants; with what speed you may
Conduct Cassandra hither; I must give her
To the king's hand. The other captives then,
Each as allotted, lead to their new lords.—
But what is this? Why flames the blazing torch
Within? What mean these Trojan dames? To fire
The inmost tent? that, since the hour draws nigh
When from this land they must perforce be borne
To Argos, they may perish in the flames,
Seeking to die; ill brooks th' excessive love
Of freedom woes like these. Open these doors,
Open, lest what to these may give delight,
And grief to Greece, may to my blame be charged.

Hecuba. It is not so; they raise no flames; but forth
My frentic child, Cassandra, rushes to us.

CASSANDRA, HECUBA, TALTHYBIUS, CHORUS.

Cassan. Wave the torch, and spread its light;
Thus I bear it blazing bright,
Rev'rence and illume the shrine;
Royal Hymen, it is thine.
See, the happy bridegroom see,
And the happy bride in me:
At Argos I shall mount the nuptial bed,
Royal Hymen, by thee led.
Since thy tears, my mother, flow,
And thy heart is rent with woe,
For my slaughtered father's fate,
And my country's ruined state,
At my spousals I will raise
A fire shall shine, shall flame, shall blaze,
And, royal Hymen, on the bridal night
Give to Hecate the light,
For a virgin's nuptial bands;
Sacred custom this demands.
Nimbly let your feet advance,
Quiv'ring high in festive dance,
As if Priam's prosperous throne
Bright with royal splendours shone.
The choir is hallowed: with them, Phœbus, move:
In thy sacred laurel grove
Off'rings at thy shrine I lay,
Hymen, 'tis my bridal day.
Lead the dance, my mother, lead,
Quick in varying motions tread,
And, my gliding steps to grace,
Light the mazy measure trace.
To royal Hymen raise, O hallowed train,
Raise the joy-announcing strain;
Hail the bride with songs of joy,
Gorgeous-vested nymphs of Troy;
Hail the bridegroom, to my bed
By the Fates' appointment led.

Chorus. Wilt thou not, queen, thy raving daughter hold,
That she appear not 'midst the host of Greece
Possessed with this indecent levity?

Hecuba. O Vulcan, thou indeed the nuptial torch
Of mortals bearest. but a baleful flame

Dost thou now wave, and void of each fond hope.
Alas, my daughter, little did I think
That ever thou shouldst wed beneath the spear,
Beneath the arms of Greece! Give me the torch;
Ill it beseems thee frentic thus, with step
Thus wild, to bear its flame: nor to thy mind
Have thy misfortunes brought more sober sense;
But, my poor child, thy state remains the same.
Bear in the torches; and, ye Trojan dames,
For tears exchange her nuptial melody.

Cassan. Mother, adorn my head; for I have gained
A conquest: in my nuptials with a king
Rejoice. Come, lead me. If I go too slow,
Push me by force; for this is not Apollo.
Th' illustrious Agamemnon, king of Greece,
Weds me; but in these nuptials he shall find
More woe than Paris when he wedded Helen;
For I will kill him, and lay waste his house;
Thus for my brothers' and my father's death
I will have vengeance: but no words of this:
I will say nothing of the axe, which goes
Into my neck, and that of others too;
Nor of the contest where a mother bleeds
(This shall my nuptials raise); nor of the house
Of Atreus sunk in ruins: I will show
This city than the Grecians far more blest
(I feel th' inspiring god, but will awhile
Bid the prophetic fury cease to swell):
They for one woman, and one fatal bed
Sought Helen, and lost thousands; their wise chief
Himself, to gain what most the soul abhors,
Hath thrown away what most it loves, and given
The sweet domestic pleasures of his children
To win his brother's wife; yet was she borne
Consentingly, not forcibly away.
When to Scamander's banks they came, they died;
Nor from their country, or its high-tow'red towns,
Were they driven forth: those whom the sword
destroyed
Their children saw no more, nor were their limbs
By their wives' hands in decent vestments wrapt,
But in a foreign land they lie. At home

Like desolation reigns: their widowed wives
Are dead; their parents, childless, have in vain
Reared offspring in their houses; not a son
Survives to pour libations at their tombs.
Such are the triumphs of this martial host.
Deeds of impurity are better hushed
In silence: never Muse be mine, to chaunt
What raises on the modest cheek a blush.
The Trojans, what is glory's brightest grace,
Died for their country: they, beneath the spear
Who fell, were by their friends borne home, and dead
Found in their native land a sepulchre,
Entombed by those from whom those rites were due.
But such, as fell not in the field, each day
Dwelt with their wives and children; whilst the Greeks
Were strangers to that sweet society.
Mournful the fate of Hector seems to thee:
But weigh it well: he dies, among the brave
Esteemed the bravest; this high fame the Greeks
By their arrival raised; had they not come
The hero's virtues had remained obscure.
Paris espoused the daughter of high Jove;
Had she not been his bride, he would at home
Have formed some mean alliance, unrenowned.
War then the man, whom prudence rules, will shun:
But if its flames are kindled, no mean crown
He wins who bravely for his country dies:
Not to act bravely is inglorious shame.
Therefore behoves thee, mother, not to wail
Thy country, or my bed; for those to thee
Whose deeds have been most hostile, and to me,
I by my nuptials to the dust will bow.

Chorus. How sweetly at thy house's ills thou smilest,
Chaunting what haply thou wilt not show true!

Talthy. But that Apollo hath with frenzy hurt
Thy sense, unpunished with such taunting speech
Thou shouldst not from this country send the chiefs.
But what commands respect, and is held high
As wise, is nothing better than the mean
Of no repute: for this most potent king
Of all the Grecians, the much honoured son

Of Atreus, is enamoured with his prize,
This frentic raver. I am a poor man,
Yet would I not receive her to my bed.
For thee, since thou hast not thy perfect sense,
All thy reproaches on the Greeks and all
Thy praises of the Trojans, to the winds
I give to scatter them. But to the ships
Attend me, beauteous minion of our chief.
Thou, since Ulysses wills to lead thee with him,
Follow; a virtuous lady shalt thou serve,
As they, who came to Ilium, speak her fame.

Cassan. This is a busy slave. What one name suits
All heralds? The abhorrence of mankind,
Ye ministers of tyrants and of states,
And dost thou say that to Ulysses' house
My mother shall be led? Where are the words
Of Phœbus then, which say, by me made known,
Here she shall die? The rest revile I not:
But he, unhappy, knows not what a train
Of suff'rings waits him, so that he shall deem
Mine and the Phrygians' ills, with his compared,
Treasures of gold: for after ten long years
To ten long years here wasted, he shall reach
His native land alone; but visit first
The straits, amidst whose gulfs, that now disgorge
And now resorb the floods, Charybdis holds
Her terrible abode; the blood-stained cave
Of the huge Cyclops, mountain savage, gorged
With flesh where life yet quivers; Circe's isle,
Whose charmed cup transforms whoever taste
To swine; tempestuous seas with wrecks o'erspread;
Men in the flow'ry Lotus who delight;
The sacred heifers of the sun, whose flesh
Shall send forth lowings, to Ulysses sound
Of horror: to be brief, to Pluto's realms
Alive shall he descend: and from the waves
Escaped, returning to his country find
A thousand ills. But why repeat the toils
That wait Ulysses? Go, that I with speed
May wed a bridegroom in the shades below.
Thou, who in thought some glorious deed art now
Achieving, leader of the Grecian host,

Wretch, shall be buried wretchedly by night,
Not in the day; and me, a livid corse,
Naked, cast out, the torrent floods shall leave
In their rough channels, nigh my bridegroom's tomb,
A prey to beasts, this priestess of Apollo.
Ye garlands of the gods, most dear to me,
Prophetic ornaments, farewell: the feasts,
In which I once delighted, are to me
No more. Begone! I rend you from me. While
I yet am chaste, I give them to the winds,
To toss, to scatter them, prophetic king!
Where is the leader's bark? How shall my foot
Mount its tall sides? No longer shall thy sails
Wait for the breathing gales; but thou shalt bear me
A Fury, an Erinnys, from this land.
Farewell, my mother! Do not shed a tear.
O my loved country, O my brother, sunk
To the dark realms below, O father soon
Shall you receive me; to your shades I come
Triumphant from the ruin of the house
Of Atreus, by whose sons we thus are fall'n!

HECUBA, CHORUS.

Chorus. Ye, who attend the aged Hecuba,
Behold you not the queen, how to the ground
Speechless she sinks? Shall not your hands with care
Support her? Wretches, will you let her age
Lie on the earth? Haste, raise her, upright raise her

Hecuba. Forbear, ye virgins; what was pleasing once
Pleases no more: here let me lie thus fall'n,
A fall that suits what I have suffered, what
I suffer, and shall suffer. O ye gods,
Unkind associates I indeed invoke,
Yet when affliction rends the anguished heart,
We with becoming grace invoke the gods
First it is pleasing to me to recount
My happier fortunes: thus my woes shall raise
A stronger pity. Royal was my birth,
And marriage joined me to a royal house;
There I was mother of illustrious sons,
Sons with superior excellence adorned
Above the Phrygians; such no Trojan dame,

No Grecian, no Barbarian e'er could boast;
These I saw fall'n beneath the Grecian spear,
And laid my severed tresses on their tomb.
For Priam too, their father, flowed my tears;
His fate I heard not from report, but saw it,
These eyes beheld him murdered at the altar
Of guardian Jove; my vanquished city stormed;
My daughters, whom I nurtured high in hope
Of choosing honourable nuptials for them,
For others nurtured from my hands are rent;
There is no hope that me they e'er shall see,
And I shall never see them more. Th' extreme,
The height of my afflicting ills is this:
I to some house shall go a hoary slave,
To some base task, most irksome to my age,
Assigned; or at their doors to keep the keys
A portress shall I wait, the mother once
Of Hector, or to labour at the mill;
For royal couches, on the ground to make
My rugged bed; and o'er these worn-out limbs
The tattered remnant of a worn-out robe,
Unseemly to my happier state, to throw.
Ah, for one woman's nuptial bed, what woes
Are mine, and will be mine! Alas, my child,
My poor Cassandra, madd'ning with the gods,
By what misfortunes is thy purity
Defiled? And where art thou, Polyxena,
O thou unhappy! Thus of all my sons
And all my daughters, many though they were,
Not one is left to soothe my miseries.
Why do you raise me, virgins? With what hope
Lead you this foot, which once with stately port
In Troy advanced, but now a slave, to seek
A bed of leaves strewn on the ground, a stone
My pillow, there to lie, to perish there
Wasted with tears? Then deem not of the great
Now flourishing as happy, ere they die.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

For Troy, O Muse, attune thy woe,
And steep in tears the solemn-breathing song;

To such a theme such notes belong:
For Troy unwonted measures now shall flow,
Shall tell my sorrows, how beneath
The guileful fabric, big with death,
I fell a captive to the Argive spear:
When from th' enormous beast, that hides
A host within its caverned sides,
With golden trappings hung around,
Rolled to the gates with thund'ring sound,
Issuing in arms the chiefs of Greece appear.
But from the rock of Ilium high
With shouts the blinded Phrygians cry,
"Go, from your toils released, ye sons of Troy.
This hallowed fabric draw with joy:
To Jove-born Pallas place the pledge divine
In favoured Ilium's rampired shrine."
The young, the old promiscuous throng,
And roll with songs of joy the fraudful pest along.

Antistrophe.

From every street with eager pace,
The pines of Ida flaming in their hands,
Rush to the gates the Trojan bands,
To Pallas in her favoured tower to place
The fabric formed with Argive wiles,
The pest which Phrygia's state beguiles,
The heaven-framed present of the unyoked steed:
With twisted cables thrown around
They drag it o'er the fatal ground,
Like a new bark in gallant state,
To Pallas in her rocky seat.
To toil and joy the shades of night succeed:
The Libyan pipe swells clear and high,
Attuned to Phrygian melody;
To the light notes in many an airy round
The frolic virgins nimbly bound,
And joyful as they dance their voices raise,
Sweet warbling spritely-fancied lays.
In every house the blazing fires
Sink at the hour of rest, and their swart light expires.

Epode.

Then too my vaulted roofs around
The voice of joy was heard to sound;
We to Diana raised the strain,
Chaste huntress-queen that leads the mountain train.
Sudden a wild tumultuous roar
With shudd'ring horror strikes our souls:
Loud and more loud the city o'er
To Pergamus it deep'ning rolls:
My dear, dear infants round their mother prest,
And grasped with trembling hands my vest.
Now, by Minerva's guardian care,
Rushed from its ambush the imprisoned war:
Round the polluted altars slain
In blood are rolled the sons of Troy:
O'er the rich rooms, once scenes of joy,
Horror and desolation reign,
And bear to Greece, her victor sons t' adorn,
The crown from weeping Phrygia borne.

HECUBA, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

Chorus. See, royal lady, on this foreign car
Andromache is borne; and at her breast,
Which trembles to the motion of the wheels,
Astyanax, the son of Hector, laid.
Hecuba. Whither, unhappy woman, art thou borne,
Placed in that car beside the brazen arms
Of Hector, and the spoils by the strong spear
Rent from the Phrygians? Distant far from Troy
In Phthia these the proud son of Achilles
Shall hang, to crown the temples of the gods.
Andro. My Grecian lords force me away.
Hecuba. Ah me!
Andro. Why dost thou heave my sighs?
Hecuba. Ah wretched me!
Andro. That for my sorrows—
Hecuba. Seest thou this, O Jove!
Andro. And my distresses rise.
Hecuba. Alas, my children!
Andro. We were thy children once.
Hecuba. My state is fall'n;
Troy too is fall'n.

Andro. Unhappy!
Hecuba. And my sons,
My noble sons are fall'n.
Andro. Alas, alas!
Hecuba. Alas my ills, the miserable fate
Andro. Of ruined Troy.
Hecuba. Which smokes upon the ground.
Andro. Oh, wouldst thou come, my husband!
Hecuba. Thou dost call
My son, unhappy, in the realms below!
Andro. Thou bulwark of thy wife!
Hecuba. And thou, whose soul
Swelled high against the Grecians, Priam, once
The aged father of my children, lead,
O lead me to the gloomy realms below!
Chorus. These griefs are great.
Hecuba. And dreadful are the ills
We suffer.
Chorus. For thy ruined country: woes,
Such is the pleasure of the gods, succeed
To woes. Nor hath thy son escaped from death,
Who for a bed abhorred hath sunk in dust
The towers of Troy, and near the rampired rock
Of Pallas stretched the bodies of the slain,
Welt'ring in blood, by vultures to be torn:
And Troy is bowed beneath the servile yoke.
Hecuba. My country, my unhappy country, thee
Wasted I weep.
Chorus. Thou seest its wretched end.
Hecuba. And thee my house, where oft I was a mother.
Chorus. Unhappy children, wasted is your town,
Your mother desolate.
Hecuba. What strains are these,
What strains of woe! Tears after tears stream down
In sorrow for my house: the dead forgets
His sorrows, and his tears stream down no more.
Chorus. How sweet are tears to those who suffer ills?
Sweet are the strains of lamentation, sweet
The mournful Muse that tunes her notes to woe.
Andro. Mother of Hector, that brave chief, whose spear
Once pierced the Grecian squadrons, seest thou this?

Hecuba. I see th' appointment of the gods; the low
How they exalt, and hurl the mighty down.
Andro. I, with my child, am led away, the spoil
Of war: th' illustrious progeny of kings,
O fatal change, is sunk to slavery.
Hecuba. Necessity is rig'rous: from me late
Cassandra went, torn from my arms by force.
Andro. Alas! Another Ajax then, it seems,
Thy daughter finds: but thou hast other ills
Hecuba. Unmeasured and unnumbered are my ills:
Afflictions with afflictions still contend.
Andro. Polyxena, thy daughter is no more:
Devoted to Achilles, on his tomb
An off'ring to the lifeless dead she fell.
Hecuba. Ah wretched me! This was the dread event
Talthybius hinted to me in dark terms.
Andro. I saw her, and descending from this car
Wrapt the vests round her, and bewailed her dead.
Hecuba. Alas, my daughter, what unhallowed rites!
Alas, alas! unseemly hast thou perished.
Andro. She perished, as she perished: but her fate
In death is happier far than mine who live.
Hecuba. 'Tis not one thing, my child, to live or die:
The living hopes await, the dead are nothing.
Andro. Hear, that with pleasure I may touch thy soul
Not to be born, I argue, and to die,
Are equal: but to die is better far
Than to live wretched; for he knows not grief
Who hath no sense of misery: but to fall
From fortune's blessed height, to the low state
Of abject wretchedness, distracts the soul
With the keen sense of former happiness.
Like as the light of life she ne'er had seen,
Polyxena is dead, and of her ills
Knows nothing: I, who aimed at glorious rank,
And reached my aim, from fortune widely erred:
All that to prudent matrons gives a grace,
In Hector's house was ever my employ.
First, for in this to women blame is due,
Charged or not charged, to such as rove abroad,
I checked this wand'ring humour, and remained
At home, within my house; nor gay discourse

Of females there admitted, but intent
On ordering what was useful, deemed myself
Well occupied. With silence of the tongue
And cheerfulness of look I entertained
My husband: where my province to command
I knew, and where to yield obedience to him.
The fame of this was bruited through the host
Of Greece, and wrought my ruin; for the son
Of fierce Achilles, soon as I was made
A captive, wished to take me as his wife,
Doomed in the house of those, whose slaught'ring hands
I rue, to be a slave. From my fond heart
Could I rend Hector, and expand my breast
To this new husband, faithless to the dead
Should I appear: if I disdain his love,
I shall excite the malice of my lords.
Short time, they say, to a new lord disarms
A woman's hate: but her my soul abhors,
Who for new nuptials slights her former husband,
And loves another: e'en the social steed,
Divided from its fellow, draws the yoke
Reluctant; yet the beast, by nature formed
Less excellent, nor speech nor reason knows.
O my loved Hector, I was blest in thee,
Thou wast the lord of all my wishes, great
In understanding, noble birth, and wealth,
And valour: from my father's house thou first
Ledd'st me a virgin to the bridal bed:
Now thou are perished, and I mount the bark
For Greece, a captive to the servile yoke.
Hath not the death then of Polyxena,
Whom thou bewailest, lighter ills than mine!
For not to me e'en Hope, which still is left
To all of mortal race, remains; no thought
That better fortune e'er will visit me
With pleasing expectation cheats my mind.

Chorus. Alike our suff'rings; and thou teachest me,
Thine own ills wailing, my unhappy state.

Hecuba. I never entered bark; my knowledge springs
From what in picture I have seen, or heard
From others. When a storm, whose moderate force
May be sustained, the curling billows swells,

With prompt alacrity the sailors toil
To guide the vessel safe; one at the helm
His station takes, one tends the sails, one plies
The pump: but if the wild tempestuous sea
Mocks their vain efforts, they to fortune yield,
And leave her to the rolling of the waves.
So fares it now with me: with various ills
Encompassed I am silent, give them way,
And check my vain complaints; for from the gods
This cruel storm o'erpowers me. But do thou,
O my loved child, on Hector's fate no more
Fix thy sad thoughts; not all thy streaming tears
Will save him: honour then thy present lord,
And with thy gentle manners win his soul;
This doing, thou shalt cheer thy friends, and train
This child, my Hector's son, to manhood, strong
To succour Troy; that sons from him may spring,
Who shall again the towers of Ilium raise,
And once more to its state restore the town.
But trouble yet perchance from trouble springs;
This Grecian officer I see again
Advancing to us, bearing new commands.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

Talthy. Thou wife of Hector, of the Phrygian once
The bravest, do not hate me: for my tongue
Unwillingly will utter what the Greeks
Decree and the Pelopidæ command.
Andro. Why with this tragic proem dost thou greet me?
Talthy. It is decreed thy son—how shall I speak it!
Andro. What? that he have not the same lord with me?
Talthy. None of the Grecians e'er shall be his lord.
Andro. To leave him here, a relic of the Trojans?
Talthy. I cannot utter, but with pain, thy ills.
Andro. I praise thy modest awe, speak thou but good.
Talthy. This great ill thou must know: they slay thy son.
Andro. This than my marriage is a greater ill.
Talthy. Ulysses 'midst th' assembled Greeks prevails.
Andro. Ah, these are ills too grievous to be borne.
Talthy. Not to bring up a valiant warrior's son.
Andro. Thus for his own sons may his voice prevail!

Talthy. But that they cast him from the towers of Troy.
In this sad trial be thy prudence shown:
Withhold him not, with noble fortitude
Support thy griefs: nor think that thou hast power,
Where all thou canst is nothing. Thou canst find
No succour: it behoves thee weigh this well.
Low lies thy city, low thy husband lies,
Thou art a captive: we have force enough
Against one woman. Wish not then to strive;
Let no indecent, no despiteful deed
Dishonour thee. Nor would I have thee vent
Thy curses on the Greeks; for shouldst thou speak
What shall disgust the troops, thy son perchance
May lie unpitied, and denied the rites
Of sepulture: but if thou bear thine ills
In silence and with fortitude, his corse
Will not be left unburied, and thyself
Wilt from the Grecians find more courtesy.

Andro. O, my dear child, my fondly cherished son,
Thou by the foes shalt die, ah me! and leave
Thy wretched mother. Yes, thy father's worth
Shall kill thee, which to others is a shield
Yielding protection. In an evil hour
For thee thy father's virtues are renowned.
O my unhappy bed, and nuptial rites,
Which led me to the house of Hector, there
Not to be mother of a son to fall
A victim by the Grecians, but to reign
Lord of the fruitful Asia! Dost thou weep,
My son? Hast thou a sense of thy ill fate?
Why dost thou clasp me with thy hands, why hold
My robes, and shelter thee beneath my wings
Like a young bird? No more my Hector comes
Returning from the tomb, he grasps no more
His glitt'ring spear, bringing protection to thee;
No more thy father's kindred, or the force
Of the brave Phrygians: but from Ilium's height,
By merciless hands hurled headlong, shalt thou fall,
And crushed breathe out thy life. O soft embrace,
And to thy mother dear! O fragrant breath!
In vain I swathed thy infant limbs, in vain
I gave thee nurture at this breast, and toiled

Wasted with care. If ever, now embrace,
Now clasp thy mother, throw thine arms around
My neck, and join thy cheek, thy lips to mine.
Why, O ye Grecians, studying barb'rous ills,
Why will you kill my son? He hath not wronged you.
Daughter of Tyndarus, but not of Jove,
From many fathers must I deem thee sprung,
From Vengeance first, then Hate, from Slaughter, Death,
And all the ills earth breeds: for ne'er from Jove
Durst I pronounce thy birth. Thou fatal pest
To many Phrygians, and to many Greeks,
Perdition seize thee! By thy beauteous eyes
Thou vilely hast destroyed the realms of Troy.
Here, take him, bear him, hurl him from the height,
If ye must hurl him, feast upon his flesh:
For from the gods hath ruin fall'n on us:
We have no power to save my child from death.
Cover this wretched body, wrap it close,
Cast it into your galley; for I come
To glorious nuptials, having lost my son.

Chorus. Unhappy Troy, what numbers hast thou lost,
Through one vile woman, and her hateful bed!

Andro. Forbear, my son, forbear thy fond embrace
Of thy afflicted mother. Go, ascend
The summit of those towers, thy father's once,
There leave thy life, for so hath Greece decreed
Take him: fit herald of this deed is he,
Who knows no touch of pity or of shame,
But rather to your mandate gives assent.

Hecuba. O child, O son of my unhappy son,
We of thy life, beyond our thoughts, are reft,
I, and thy mother! What can I, poor boy,
What can I do for thee, but smite this head,
And beat this breast? That we can give thee that
Is in our power. Ah me, what griefs for Troy
I suffer, what for thee! Is there an ill
We have not? What is wanting to the woes,
Which all the dreadful band of Ruin brings?

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Thou lord of Salamis, where love
The honey-gath'ring bees to rove,
Thou, who didst hold thy island-seat
Around whose rocks the billows beat,
Whose hallowed mounds first boast to show
Ranged down their sloping sides the olive bough,
Of blue-eyed Pallas heavenly crown,
And glory of her polished town:
Thou with Alcmena's son, whose hand
Grasped the strong bow, heldst high command.
Thy soul, like his, to glorious action bold,
To Troy, O Telamon, to Troy,
Our rampired city to destroy,
Thou camst, from Greece thou camst in times of old.

Antistrophe 1.

When, raging for the steeds denied,
Of Greece he led the blooming pride;
Where Simois pours his beauteous flood
The hero's barks at anchor stood;
Dauntless he leaped upon the strand,
His bow and arrows grasping in his hand:
Laomedon with wild affright
Marked how they winged their slaught'ring flight.
Though Phœbus squared each polished stone,
The high-raised rampires are o'erthrown;
Around the ruddy flames devouring rise,
And Troy a heap of ruin lies:
Twice raged the spear around her walls,
And twice with thund'ring sound the city falls.

Strophe 2.

In vain then at the golden bowls of Jove
Has thou thy honoured place,
Thy steps composed with sweetest grace,
Presenting at the feast divine
To heaven's high king the sparkling wine;

Vain, Dardan boy, thy glorious charge above;
For war and wasting flames destroy,
Sunk to the ground, thy native Troy.
The sea-washed shores around
Loud cries and shrieks resound,
As for her young when the poor bird complains,
And anguish swells her strains:
Their husbands some, and some their sons deplore,
Their mothers some, with age that bow,
Lament with pious woe.
Thy brimmed baths are now no more,
A silent waste the circus lies,
Once thy loved scene of manly exercise,
But thou the throne of Jove beside,
Blooming in all youth's roseate pride,
Sweetly serene dost woo each grace
To give new beauties to thy face:
Yet Priam's realms lie waste, a desert drear,
Beneath the Grecian spear.

Antistrophe 2.

O Love, O Love, that to the seats of Troy,
Thy gently glowing fire
Kindling in heavenly breasts desire,
Didst once direct thy pleasing flight,
To what a splendid, stately height,
Whilst gods her dear alliance sought with joy,
Didst thou exalt her glorious fame?
Now must thou bear another name;
No more joy-kindling Love,
But the reproach of Jove.
This fatal morn, with silver-waving wings
Which light to mortals brings,
Hath seen destruction wide its ravage spread,
Hath seen the towers of Troy laid low
Beneath th' insulting foe:
With offspring yet to bless her bed
Her husband from this land she bore;
The favoured youth yon orient regions o'er
Her four ethereal coursers bear,
Placed by her in the golden car.

Hence to thy country Hope might rise,
Graced with the favour of the skies:
But all the love, which touched the gods with joy,
Shrinks from the aid of Troy.

MENELAUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Mene. O thou bright-beaming radiance of this sun,
Helen in thee, my wife, these hands shall seize,
After the many toils I have sustained,
I, and the Grecian host. I came to Troy,
Not for a woman, as some lightly think,
But armed with vengeance 'gainst the man who broke
Each hospitable law, and from my house
Bore, as his spoil, my wife. But the just gods
He hath his meed, he and his country fall'n
Beneath the arms of Greece. The Spartan dame,
For not with pleasure can my tongue pronounce
Her name who was my wife, once was, I come
To lead from hence: for in this tent, among
The other captive dames of Troy enrolled,
Is she detained. For they, whose toiling spear
Achieved her, have presented her to me
To kill her, or, if such my will, to Greece
Alive to lead her: but my purpose is
The death of Helen to forbear at Troy,
And bear her in my stout bark o'er the seas
To Greece; and there, in vengeance for my friends
Who beneath Ilium died, to give her death.
But, ye attendants, go into the tent,
Bring her forth, drag her by the hair with blood
Deeply polluted: when the fav'ring winds
Breathe in our sails, to Greece shall she be sent.

Hecuba. O Jove, who rulest the rolling of the earth,
And o'er it hast thy throne, whoe'er thou art,
The ruling mind, or the necessity
Of nature, I adore thee. Dark thy ways
And silent are thy steps; to mortal man
Yet thou with justice all things dost ordain.

Mene. Why to the gods dost thou renew thy vows?

Hecuba. I praise thy resolution, Menelaus,
If thou shalt kill thy wife. But fly her sight:
She captivates the eyes of men, takes towns,

Sets houses all on fire; such blandishments
She hath t' allure the soul; I know her well,
Thou knowst her, and all they that suffer by her.

HELENA, MENELAUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Helena. This is a prelude which may well cause fear;
For by thy servants, Menelaus, by force
I from the tent am dragged. But little wants
T' assure me that I am detested by thee.
Yet I would ask thee, by the states of Greece
And thee touching my life what is decreed.
Mene. Justice hath not pronounced fixed sentence on thee;
But all the host of Greece, whom thou hast wronged,
Give thee to me, and thou by me shalt die.
Helena. May I have leave 'gainst this to urge my plea,
That, if I die, not justly I shall die?
Mene. Not to hold converse came I, but to kill thee.
Hecuba. Yet hear her, Menelaus, nor let her die,
Her bland excuse not urged: but to her plea
Let me reply, for of the ills in Troy
Thou nothing knowst; but when I sum them all,
From death no refuge shall be left to her.
Mene. This requires leisure; yet if she would speak,
She is allowed: but let her know thy words
Gain her this leave; no grace to her I grant.
Helena. Let me or well or ill appear to speak,
Thou no reply wilt haply deign me, deemed [*to* MENELAUS]
An enemy: yet to the crime, of which
I know thou wilt accuse me, I will make [*to* HECUBA]
Reply, and to thy charge my pleas oppose,
'Gainst thee my charge. She first, then, to these ills
Gave birth, when she gave Paris birth; and next
The aged Priam ruined Troy and thee,
The infant not destroying, at his birth
Denounced a baleful firebrand. Hear from thence
What followed. 'Twixt the rival goddesses
Paris was judge. From Pallas was his meed
To lead the Phrygian arms, and conquer Greece;
From Juno, if to her his voice adjudged

The prize, to hold o'er Asia and the bounds
Of Europe his wide empire: but, my form
Extolling, Venus promised to his arms
To give me, if in beauty she surpassed
The other goddesses. Mark now th' event.
The prize is given to Venus; and so far
My nuptials profit Greece: you are not fall'n
Beneath Barbarians or a tyrant's sway,
Nor to protect your country stand in arms.
I, in what Greece is happy, am undone,
Sold for my beauty, and with cruel taunts
Reviled for what my head deserves a crown.
But thou wilt say that to an obvious charge
I have not yet replied, that from thy house
I fled by stealth. Her son, for ruin born,
Or Paris called or Alexander, came,
And brought no feeble goddess in his train:
Him, thou most worthless, leaving in thy house,
From Sparta didst thou hoist thy sails for Crete.
Well, what ensued of thee I will not ask,
But of myself: what could induce my thought,
My country for a stranger, and my house
Betrayed, to follow him? Thy vengeance rouse
Against the goddess, and be thou than Jove
More potent; he o'er other gods bears rule,
But is her slave: I then may pardon find.
But hence against me thou mayst urge a charge
Of specious argument: When Paris died,
And low in earth was laid, behoved me then,
Since by no god my nuptials then were wrought,
To leave his house, and to the Grecian ships
To come. On this I earnestly was bent;
Witness, ye guards who kept the gates, and you
Who stationed on the walls held careful watch,
How oft you found me from the battlements
With ropes attempting to slide down by stealth:
But this new husband seizing me by force,
Deiphobus, the Trojans much averse,
Held me his wife. How then can justice doom me
To die? With justice how can I be slain
By thee, my husband, since he wedded me
By force? Thus from my house was I a slave

Sold for the prize of conquest. If thou aim
T' exceed the gods in power, the thought is folly.
Chorus. Defend thy children and thy country, queen;
Refute her glozing speech. Her words are fair,
Her actions foul. In this much danger lies.
Hecuba. The goddesses my voice shall first defend,
And show that she unjustly charges blame
On them. For Juno never will I deem,
Or virgin Pallas, to such frenzy sunk,
That Argos to Barbarians she would sell,
Or Pallas to the Phrygians e'er enslave
Her favoured Athens, who in sportive mood
And dainty dalliance to Ida came,
For form contesting. Whence this strong desire
In royal Juno of superior charms?
Was it to win a greater lord than Jove?
Did Pallas, of her father who had asked
To keep her virgin purity unsoiled,
Flying connubial rites, aim now t' obtain
The nuptials of some god? Forbear to charge
These goddesses with folly, to set off
Thy own misdeeds; no credence with the wise
Wilt thou acquire. But Venus, thou hast said
(High subject this for laughter), with my son
Came to the house of Menelaus. At rest
In heaven remaining, could she not have brought her,
And e'en Amyclæ, had she pleased, to Troy?
My son was with surpassing beauty graced;
And thy fond passion, when he struck thy sight,
Became a Venus: for each foolish fondness
To mortals is a Venus, and the soul
Bereaves of reason. When thine eyes beheld him
Glitt'ring in rich barbaric vests and gold,
Thy passions were to madness soon inflamed,
At Argos little hadst thou been with wealth
Acquainted. Quitting Sparta, thou hadst hope
The Phrygian state, flowing with gold, would yield
Thy proud expense supplies; nor could the house
Of Menelaus within its narrow walls
Give thy insulting vanities free scope.
Well, let that pass. My son, thou sayst, by force
Bore thee away. What Spartan of that force

Was sensible? With what cries didst thou call
Castor, thy brother, to thy aid, then strong
In manhood's prime, then living, to the stars
Not then exalted? When thou camest to Troy,
And, following close, the Grecians, raged the spear
In conflict fierce; whene'er his arms obtained
Aught of advantage, Menelaus thy praise
Extolled, to grieve my son in that his love
Met with a potent rival: if success
Favoured the Trojans, he was nothing then.
Thine eyes were fixed on Fortune; this thy care,
To follow her; to Virtue thou wouldst pay
No homage. Yet with ropes didst thou attempt,
Such is thy plea, down from the walls to slide
By stealth, as if detained against thy will:
By whom wast thou surprised in act to fix
The pendent rope or point the sharpened sword?
This would a woman of a gen'rous soul,
Who sorrowed for her husband lost, have done.
Yet much did I admonish thee, and oft,
"Leave, O my daughter, leave us: other wives
My sons shall wed: I to the Grecian ships
Will send thee secretly, that war no more
'Twixt Greece and us may rage." To this thy heart
Was much averse; still in thy husband's house
Thy insolence of grandeur wouldst thou hold,
Imperious still from thy barbaric train
Claim prostrate adoration: there thy pride
Found rich supplies; from thence didst thou come forth
Gorgeously vested, and the same bright sky
View with thy husband, O detested wretch,
When it became thee with thy garments rent,
Humble, and cow'ring, and thy tresses shorn,
To have appeared, and for thy former faults
To veil thy shameless pride with modesty.
But, Menelaus, that thou mayst know what end
My words would have, give Greece a glorious crown
By killing her, and this thy law confirm
To other women, "She who dares betray
Her husband, faithless to his bed, shall die."

Chorus. Oh, for the honour of thy ancestors,
And of thy house, punish thy wife. From Greece

Take this vile woman, this reproach, away·
And show thy gen'rous spirit to thy foes.

Mene. In this thy sentiment accords with mine,
That willingly she left my house, and sought
A foreign bed; and, to set off her plea,
Is Venus introduced. Go, where with stones
Thou shalt be crushed: and in one hour repay
The Grecians for their tedious toils, by death,
That thou mayst learn ne'er to disgrace me more.

Helena. Low at thy knees a suppliant I beg thee,
To me impute not what the gods have done
Amiss. Ah, do not kill me; pardon me!

Hecuba. Thy brave associates in this wasteful war,
Whom she hath slain, I beg thee for their sake,
And for my children's, do not thou betray.

Mene. Forbear, age-honoured lady; for of her
I have no heed. You, who attend me, hence
To the bark bear her: she shall sail for Greece.

Hecuba. Let her not enter the same bark with thee.

Mene. Why? Is the freight more heavy than before?

Hecuba. He is no lover, who not always loves.

Mene. That every thought of love may be discharged,
Thy will shall be complied with: the same bark
With me she shall not enter: not amiss
Is thy monition. When she comes to Greece,
For her vile deeds as vilely shall she die,
And teach all other women to be chaste,
No easy lesson: yet her death with fear
Shall strike their folly, be they worse than she.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

So, to the Grecian arms a prey,
The temple Ilium's height that crowned,
The altar breathing odours round,
O Jove, dost thou betray
The flames of holy sacrifice,
The clouds of incense wreathing to the skies.
The towers of Pergamus that rose
A sacred rampire 'gainst the foes,

The darksome, ivy-vested woods,
The woods that wave on Ida's brow,
Down whose steep sides the cool translucent floods
In mazy channels flow,
The height, which first the sun's bright ray
Impurples with the orient beams of day.

Antistrophe 1.

Ah, banished is each solemn rite;
The sacred choirs with tuneful song,
Echoing thy hollow rocks among,
No more shall charm the night:
No more thy summits shall behold
The forms of gods that breathe in sculptured gold:
On thee the full-orbed moon no more
Shall Phrygia's hallowed sports restore.
O king, in yon ethereal skies
High-throned who holdst thy sov'reign state,
Will in thy soul no gentle pity rise,
For Troy's unhappy fate,
Sunk to the dust her towered head
As wide the raging flames their ravage spread?

Strophe 2.

Dear to my soul, my wedded lord,
Fall'n, fall'n beneath the slaught'ring sword,
Nor cleansing bath, nor decent tomb
Was thine, but in the Stygian gloom
Wanders thy melancholy ghost.
But me the bark that ploughs the main,
Winged with her swelling sails, shall bear
To Argos famed for steeds that whirl the car:
Where by the lab'ring Cyclops rise
The rampired walls that brave the skies.
My children, now a friendless train,
Wailing with sighs and tears their fate,
Call on their mother in the gate:
Their mother from their eyes the Grecian host
In the black vessel bear away,
And dash with oars the foaming sea;
To sacred Salamis they sweep,
Or where the Isthmus o'er the deep

Stretches its head, and views with pride
An ocean rolling 'gainst each side;
Where Pelops in the rocky strait
Fixed in old times his royal seat.

Antistrophe 2.

On the detested bark, the waves
In the wide ocean when she braves
May the loud thunder's deep'ning roar
Fierce its tempestuous fury pour;
And, kindled by Idæan Jove,
The forked light'ning's bick'ring flame,
In haughty triumph as she rides,
Fall on her deck, and pierce her rifted sides:
For me from Ilium, bathed in tears,
From my loved country far she bears
A slave to some proud Grecian dame.
Reflecting Helen's winning grace
The golden mirror there hath place,
At which the virgins joy their charms t' improve.
Ne'er may she reach the Spartan shore,
Her household gods ne'er visit more,
Through Pitane ne'er proudly pass,
Nor through Minerva's gates of brass;
For Greece, through all its wide domains,
With shame her fatal marriage stains;
And gives through scenes of bitterest woe
The streams of Simois to flow.

Alas! In quick succession o'er this land
Ills roll on ills. Behold, ye Trojan dames
Oppressed with woes, the dead Astyanax,
Thrown by the ruthless Grecians from the towers.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Talthy. One vessel, royal Hecuba, yet waits
To plough the deep, the treasures that remain,
Selected for Achilles' son, to bear
To Phthia's shore: the youthful chief is gone,
Informed of some calamities, which late
Have fall'n on Peleus, that Acastus, son
Of Pelias, hath driven him from his realms:
On this with quicker speed, than if the time

Allowed delay, he sailed, and with him bore
Andromache, who from mine eyes wrung tears
At her departure, for her country such
Her mournful sighs, and such at Hector's tomb
Her invocations: earnest her request
To thee, that her dead child, who from the tower
Fell and expired, thou in the earth wouldst lay,
Thy Hector's son; and this brass-plated shield,
The terror of the Grecians, which his father
Before his breast once raised; that to the house
Of Peleus, nay to the same chamber, where
Andromache, the mother of this child,
Must mount the nuptial bed, she may not bear it,
To sorrow at its sight: but for the chest
Of cedar, for the marble tomb, in this
That thou wouldst bury him; conjuring me
To give him to thy arms, that with what robes
And crowns thy present fortune yields thee means,
Thou her dead son wouldst grace, since she is gone,
And her lord's haste allowed her not to give
Her dear child to the tomb. When thou hast dressed
The body with what ornaments thou mayst,
The earth will we heap on him; then we sail.
With thy best speed what is enjoined thee do:
From one toil I have freed thee; passing o'er
Scamander's stream the body I have bathed,
And washed its wounds: but now I go to sink
Deep in the earth his place of sepulture,
That with more speed, with what thou hast in charge
My toil concurring, we may sail for Greece.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

Hecuba. Place the orbed shield of Hector on the ground,
A mournful sight, nor pleasing to mine eyes.
Why, O ye Grecians, who in arms excel
More than in gen'rous minds, why have you wrought,
Fearing this child, a slaughter to this hour
Unheard of? Was it lest the time might come
When he might raise fall'n Troy? There was no cause:
E'en when my Hector shone in prosperous arms,
And thousands with him shook the purple spear,

We perished: since the vanquished city sunk
Your prey, and in the war the Phrygian force
Was wasted, such an infant could you fear?
The fear, which reason disavows, I blame.
O thou most dear, how hapless was thy death?
Hadst thou in manhood's prime, the nuptial bed
Possessed, and high, imperial, godlike power,
Died for thy country, happy hadst thou been,
If aught of these be happy; now, my child,
These to thine eyes presented and thy thought,
Thou didst not taste, nor aught of what thy house
Contained enjoy. Ah me, how wretchedly
Thy father's walls, the towers by Phœbus raised,
Have rent the crispéd ringlets from thy head,
Which thy fond mother cherished, nor withheld
The frequent kiss! But now, the bones all crushed,
The slaughter riots, to abstain from words
Of harsher utt'rance. Ah, these hands, whose joints
Once the dear image of thy father's bore,
Now lie with loosened nerves! O thou dear mouth,
Which utteredst many a spritely pleasantry,
How art thou mangled? Where thy promise now
Which once thou madst me, hanging on my robes?
"O mother, didst thou say, these clust'ring locks
Will I for thee cut off, and to thy tomb
With my companions bear them, hailing thee
With dear address." Such honours now to me
Thou dost not pay; but thee, unhappy child,
Dead in thy early bloom, must I inter,
Old, of my country, of my children reft.
Ah me, are all my fond embraces, all
My nursing pains to lull thy infancy
To sleep, thus lost? And on thy tomb what verse,
Thy death declaring, shall the bard inscribe?
"This child the Grecians, for they feared him slew;"
A verse recording the disgrace of Greece.
But of thy father's wealth though reft, his shield
Shall yet be thine, and on its plated brass
Thou shalt be laid in th' earth. O thou, the fence
Of Hector's nervous arm, thou hast, O shield,
Lost thy best guardian! Yet how sweet to trace
The mark of his strong grasp, and on the verge

Of thy high orb the sweat, which from his brows
Amidst his toils oft dropt, when to his face
Close he applied thee! For th' unhappy dead
Bring what of ornament is left us now;
For not to splendour hath the god assigned
Our fortunes; but of what I have to grace thee
Thou shalt receive. Of mortals him I deem
Unwise, who, thinking that his state is blest,
Joys as secure: for Fortune, like a man
Distempered in his senses, this way now,
Now that way leaps, inconstant in her course.
No mortal knows stability of bliss.

Chorus. See, from the spoils of Troy their ready hands
Have brought thee ornaments t' inwrap the dead.

Hecuba. Thee, O my child, not victor with the bow
O'er thy compeers, nor on the spritely steed,
Customs held high by Phrygia's manly sons,
Unwearied in the chase, thy father's mother
Decks with these ornaments from treasures once
Thine own; but Helen, by the gods abhorred,
Hath rent them from thee, hath destroyed thy life,
And all thy hapless house in ruins laid.

Chorus. O thou hast touched, O thou hast touched my heart,
Thou, who wast once my city's mighty king!

Hecuba. Around thy limbs I wrap these gorgeous vests
Of Phrygian texture, which thou shouldst have worn
To grace thy nuptials with some noble bride
Surpassing all the Asiatic dames.
And thou, with conquests glorious, mother once
Of num'rous trophies, be thou crowned, loved shield
Of Hector: for, not dying, with the dead
Shalt thou be laid: with honours to be graced,
Thee worthier than the arms of my new lord,
The wise and base Ulysses, I esteem.

Chorus. Ah bitter lamentation! Thee, O child,
Thee shall the Earth receive: thou, mother, raise
The cry that wails the dead.

Hecuba. My heart is rent.

Chorus. My heart too for thy dreadful ills is rent.

Hecuba. Thy wounds with hands medicinal—ah me,
Vain service!—will I bind. Among the dead
All that remains shall be thy father's care.

Chorus. Strike, strike thy head; loud let thy hands resound.
Ah me!
Hecuba. Ye females dearest to my soul!
Chorus. Give utterance, royal lady, to thy griefs.
Hecuba. The gods intended nothing, but my woes,
And hate to Troy, most ruthless hate. In vain
The victims at their altars then we slew.
Yet from the heights above had not their power
Encompassed us, and low beneath the earth
Sunk us in ruin, by the Muse's voice
We had not been recorded, nor the bards
To latest ages given the lofty verse.
Go, in the tomb lay the unhappy dead;
For, as becomes the shades below, with crowns
He is adorned: but little it imports
The dead, I think, if any shall obtain
Magnificent and costly obsequies:
Vain affectation of the living this.
Chorus. Ah the unhappy mother, in thy life
Who wove her brightest hopes! Though highly blest,
As from illustrious parents thy rich stream
Of blood deriving, dreadful was thy death.
Hecuba. Alas, alas! Whom see I on the heights
Of Ilium, blazing torches in their hands
Waving? Some fresh misfortune threatens Troy.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

Talthy. Ye leaders of the bands, who have in charge
To burn the town of Priam, from my voice
Hear your instructions: idle in your hands
No longer hold the flames, but hurl them, spread
The wasting blaze, that, Ilium low in dust
O'erturned, we may with joy return to Greece.
And you (for now to you my speech is turned),
Ye Trojan dames, soon as the chiefs shall give
The trumpet's sounding voice, go to the ships
Of Greece, that from this country you may sail.
And thou, unhappy lady worn with age,
Follow: for from Ulysses these are come,
To whom thy fortune sends thee hence a slave.
Hecuba. O miserable me! This is the last,

This is the extreme bound of all my ills.
I from my country go; my city sinks
In flames. But haste, my aged foot, though weak,
That I may yet salute the wretched town:
O Troy, that once 'mongst the barbaric states
Stoodst high aspiring, thy illustrious name
Soon shalt thou lose, for thee the raging flames
Consume: and from our country us they lead,
Now lead us slaves. Ye gods! But why invoke
The gods? Invoked before they did not hear.
But bear me, let me rush into the flames:
For this would be the greatest glory to me,
With thee my burning country now to die.

Talthy. Unhappy, thou art frentic with thine ills.
Lead her, nay force her hence: for to his hand,
Charged by Ulysses, I must give his prize.

Hecuba. Woe, woe, woe, woe, intolerable woe!
O Jove, O sov'reign lord of Phrygia's realms,
Almighty sire, seest thou our miseries,
Unworthy of the race of Dardanus?

Chorus. He sees, yet this magnific city, now
No city, is destroyed. Troy is no more.

Hecuba. O sight of horror! Ilium blazes; high
O'er Pergamus the fiery deluge rolls,
Rolls o'er the city, and its tow'red red walls.

Chorus. The glories of my country, e'en as smoke
Which on light wings is borne aloft in air,
By war are wasted; all her blazing domes
Are sunk beneath the flames and hostile spear.

Hecuba. O my dear country, fost'ring land, who gavst
My children nurture!

Chorus. O unhappy land!

Hecuba. Hear, O my children, know your mother's voice!

Chorus. With mournful voice dost thou address the dead;
And throwing on the ground thy aged limbs
Dig with thy hands the earth. Behold, I bend
My knee with thine, and grov'lling on the ground
Call our unhappy husbands laid beneath.

Hecuba. Ah, we are borne, are dragged,

Chorus. O mournful voice!

Hecuba. Dragged to the house of slavery.

Chorus. From my country.

Hecuba. O Priam, Priam, thou indeed art fall'n,
Thou hast no tomb, no friend; but of my woes
Thou knowst not; for black death hath closed thine eyes;
By impious slaughter is the pious fall'n!

Chorus. Ye temples of the gods, and thou, loved town,
Destruction from the flames and pointed spear
Is on you; low on earth you soon will lie,
Your glories vanished; for the dust, like smoke
On light wings mounting high, will leave my house
An undistinguished ruin; e'en thy name,
My country, shall be lost. In different forms
Destruction comes on all. Troy is no more.

Hecuba. Heard you that dreadful crash? It was the fall
Of Pergamus. The city rocks—it rocks,
And crushed beneath the rolling ruin sinks.
My limbs, my trembling limbs, hence, bear me hence.

Talthy. Go to the wretched day of servile life.
Alas, unhappy city! But from hence
Go, to the Grecian ships advance thy steps.

HELEN

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

HELEN.
TEUCER.
CHORUS OF GRECIAN DAMES (HELEN'S ATTENDANTS).
MENELAUS.
FEMALE SERVANT.
MESSENGER.
THEOCLYMENUS.
THEONOE.
CASTOR AND POLLUX.

Scene.—PROTEUS' TOMB, AT THE ENTRANCE OF THEOCLYMENUS' PALACE IN PHAROS, AN ISLAND AT THE MOUTH OF THE NILE.

HELEN.

BRIGHT are these virgin currents of the Nile
Which water Egypt's soil, and are supplied,
Instead of drops from heaven, by molten snow.
But Proteus, while he lived, of these domains
Was lord, he in the isle of Pharos dwelt,
King of all Ægypt; for his wife he gained
One of the nymphs who haunt the briny deep,
Fair Psamathe, after she left the bed
Of Æacus; she in the palace bore
To him two children, one of them a son
Called Theoclymenus, because his life
Is passed in duteous homage to the gods;
A daughter also of majestic mien,
Her mother's darling, in her infant years
(Eidothea called by her enraptured sire):
But when the blooming maid became mature
For nuptial joys, Theonoe was the name
They gave her; all the counsels of the gods,
The present and the future, well she knew,
Such privilege she from her grandsire Nereus
Inherited. But not to fame unknown
Are Sparta's realm, whence I derive my birth,
And my sire, Tyndarus. There prevails a rumour
That to my mother Leda Jove was borne
On rapid wings, the figure of a swan

Assuming, and by treachery gained admission
To her embraces, flying from an eagle,
If we may credit such report. My name
Is Helen; but I also will recount
What woes I have endured; three goddesses,
For beauty's prize contending, in the cave
Of Ida, came to Paris; Juno, Venus,
And Pallas, virgin progeny of Jove,
Requesting him to end their strife, and judge
Whose charms outshone her rivals. But proposing
For a reward, my beauty (if the name
Of beauty suit this inauspicious form)
And promising in marriage to bestow me
On Paris, Venus conquered: for the swain
Of Ida, leaving all his herds behind,
Expecting to receive me for his bride,
To Sparta came. But Juno, whose defeat
Fired with resentment her indignant soul,
Our nuptials frustrated; for to the arms
Of royal Priam's son, she gave not me,
But in my semblance formed a living image
Composed of ether. Paris falsely deemed
That he possessed me; from that time these ills
Have been increased by the decrees of Jove,
For he with war hath visited the realms
Of Greece, and Phrygia's miserable sons,
That he might lighten from th' unrighteous swarms
Of its inhabitants the groaning earth,
And on the bravest of the Grecian chiefs
Confer renown. While in the Phrygian war,
As the reward of their victorious arms,
I to the host of Greece have been displayed,
Though absent, save in likeness and in name.
But Mercury, receiving me in folds
Of air, and covering with a cloud (for Jove
Was not unmindful of me), in this house
Of royal Proteus, who of all mankind
Was in his judgment the most virtuous, placed me,
That undefiled I might preserve the bed
Of Menelaus. I indeed am here;
But with collected troops my hapless lord
Pursues the ravisher to Ilion's towers.

Beside Scamander's stream hath many a chief
Died in my cause; but I, who have endured
All these afflictions, am a public curse;
For 'tis supposed, that treacherous to my lord,
I have through Greece blown up the flames of war.
Why then do I prolong my life? these words
I heard from Mercury: "That I again
In Sparta, with my husband shall reside,
When he discovers that I never went
To Troy:" he therefore counselled me to keep
A spotless chastity. While Proteus viewed
The solar beams, I from the nuptial yoke
Still lived exempt; but since the darksome grave
Hath covered his remains, the royal son
Of the deceased solicits me to wed him:
But honouring my first husband, at this tomb
Of Proteus, I a suppliant kneel, to him,
To him I sue, to guard my nuptial couch,
That if through Greece I bear a name assailed
By foul aspersions, no unseemly deed
May cover me with real infamy.

TEUCER, HELEN.

Teucer. Who rules this fortress? such a splendid dome
With royal porticos and blazoned roofs
Seems worthy of a Plutus for its lord.
But, O ye gods, what vision! I behold
That hateful woman who hath ruined me,
And all the Greeks. Heaven's vengeance on thy head!
Such a resemblance bear'st thou to that Helen,
That if I were not in a foreign land,
I with this stone would smite thee: thou shouldst bleed
For being like Jove's daughter.

Helen. Wretched man,
Whoe'er you are, why do you hate me thus
Because of her misfortunes?

Teucer. I have erred
In giving way to such unseemly rage.
All Greece abhors Jove's daughter. But forgive me
O woman, for the words which I have uttered.

Helen. Say who you are, and from what land you come?

Teucer. One of that miserable race the Greeks.

Helen. No wonder is it then, if you detest
The Spartan Helen. But to me declare,
Who are you, whence, and from what father sprung?
Teucer. My name is Teucer, Telamon my sire;
The land which nurtured me is Salamis.
Helen. But wherefore do you wander o'er these meads
Laved by the Nile?
Teucer. I from my native land
Am banished.
Helen. You, alas! must needs be wretched.
Who drove you thence?
Teucer. My father Telamon.
What friend canst thou hold dearer?
Helen. For what cause
Were you to exile doomed? your situation
Is most calamitous.
Teucer. My brother Ajax,
Who died at Troy, was author of my ruin.
Helen. How? by your sword deprived of life?
Teucer. He fell,
On his own blade, and perished.
Helen. Was he mad?
Who could act thus whose intellects are sound?
Teucer. Know'st thou Achilles, Peleus' son?
Helen. He erst,
I heard, to Helen as a suitor came.
Teucer. He, at his death, his comrades left to strive
Which should obtain his arms.
Helen. But why was this
Hurtful to Ajax?
Teucer. When another won
Those arms, he gave up life.
Helen. Do your afflictions
Rise from his fate?
Teucer. Because I died not with him.
Helen. O stranger, went you then to Troy's famed city?
Teucer. And having shared in laying waste its bulwarks,
I also perished.
Helen. Have the flames consumed,
And utterly destroyed them?
Teucer. Not a trace
Of those proud walls is now to be discerned.

Helen. Through thee, O Helen, do the Phrygians perish.
Teucer. The Greeks too: for most grievous are the mischiefs
Which have been wrought.
Helen. What length of time's elapsed
Since Troy was sacked?
Teucer. Seven times the fruitful year
Hath almost turned around her lingering wheel.
Helen. But how much longer did your host remain
Before those bulwarks?
Teucer. Many a tedious moon;
There full ten years were spent.
Helen. And have ye taken
That Spartan dame?
Teucer. By her dishevelled hair,
Th' adult'ress, Menelaus dragged away.
Helen. Did you behold that object of distress,
Or speak you from report?
Teucer. These eyes as clearly
Witnessed the whole, as I now view thy face.
Helen. Be cautious, lest for her ye should mistake
Some well-formed semblance which the gods have sent.
Teucer. Talk if thou wilt on any other subject;
No more of her.
Helen. Believe you this opinion
To be well-grounded?
Teucer. With these eyes I saw her,
And she e'en now is present to my soul.
Helen. Have Menelaus and his consort reached
Their home.
Teucer. They are not in the Argive land,
Nor on Eurotas' banks.
Helen. Alas! alas!
The tale you have recounted, is to her
Who hears you, an event most inauspicious.
Teucer. He and his consort, both they say are dead.
Helen. Did not the Greeks in one large squadron sail?
Teucer. Yes; but a storm dispersed their shattered fleet.
Helen. Where were they, in what seas?
Teucer. They at that time
Through the mid waves of the Ægean deep
Were passing.

Helen. Can none tell if Menelaus
Escaped this tempest?
Teucer. No man; but through Greece
'Tis rumoured he is dead.
Helen. I am undone.
Is Thestius' daughter living?
Teucer. Mean'st thou Leda?
She with the dead is numbered.
Helen. Did the shame
Of Helen cause her wretched mother's death?
Teucer. Around her neck, 'tis said the noble dame
Entwined the gliding noose.
Helen. But live the sons
Of Tyndarus, or are they too now no more?
Teucer. They are, and are not, dead; for two accounts
Are propagated.
Helen. Which is best confirmed?
O wretched me!
Teucer. Some say that they are gods
Under the semblance of two radiant stars.
Helen. Well have you spoken. But what else is rumoured?
Teucer. That on account of their lost sister's guilt
They died by their own swords. But of these themes
Enough: I wish not to renew my sorrows.
But O assist me in the great affairs
On which I to these royal mansions came,
Wishing to see the prophetess Theonoe,
And learn, from Heaven's oracular response,
How I may steer my vessel with success
To Cyprus' isle, where Phœbus hath foretold
That I shall dwell, and on the walls I rear
Bestow the name of Salamis, yet mindful
Of that dear country I have left behind.
Helen. This will your voyage of itself explain:
But fly from these inhospitable shores,
Ere Proteus' son, the ruler of this land,
Behold you: fly, for he is absent now
Pursuing with his hounds the savage prey.
He slays each Grecian stranger who becomes
His captive: ask not why, for I am silent;
And what could it avail you to be told?

Teucer. O woman, most discreetly hast thou spoken;
Thy kindness may the righteous gods repay!
For though thy person so resemble Helen,
Thou hast a soul unlike that worthless dame.
Perdition seize her; never may she reach
The current of Eurotas: but mayst thou,
Most generous woman, be for ever blest.
[*Exit* TEUCER.

Helen. Plunged as I am 'midst great and piteous woes,
How shall I frame the plaintive strain, what Muse
With tears, or doleful elegies, invoke?

ODE.

I. 1.

Ye syrens, winged daughters of the earth,
Come and attune the sympathetic string,
Expressive now no more of mirth,
To soothe my griefs, the flute of Libya bring;
Record the tortures which this bosom rend,
And echo back my elegiac strains:
Proserpine next will I invoke, to send
Numbers adapted to her votary's pains;
So shall her dark abode, while many a tear I shed,
Waft the full dirge to soothe th' illustrious dead.

CHORUS, HELEN.

CHORUS.

I. 2.

Near the cerulean margin of our streams
I stood, and on the tufted herbage spread
My purple vestments in those beams
Which from his noontide orb Hyperion shed,
When on a sudden from the waving reeds
I heard a plaintive and unwelcome sound
Of bitter lamentation; o'er the meads
Groans inarticulate were poured around:
Beneath the rocky cave, dear scene of past delight,
Some Naiad thus bewails Pan's hasty flight.

HELEN.

II. 1.

Ye Grecian nymphs, whom those barbarians caught,
And from your native land reluctant bore,
The tidings which yon sailor brought
Call forth these tears; for Ilion is no more,
By him of Ida, that predicted flame
Destroyed; through me, alas! have myriads bled,
If not through me, through my detested name.
By th' ignominious noose is Leda dead
Who my imaginary guilt deplored;
And doomed by the relentless Fates in vain
To tedious wanderings, my unhappy lord
At length hath perished 'midst the billowy main:
The twin protectors of their native land,
Castor and Pollux, from all human eyes
Are vanished, they have left Eurotas' strand,
And fields, in playful strife where each young wrestler vies.

CHORUS.

II. 2.

My royal mistress, your disastrous fate
With many a groan and fruitless tear I mourn.
I from that hour your sorrows date
When amorous Jove on snowy pinions borne,
In form a swan, by Leda was carest.
Is there an evil you have not endured?
Your mother is no more, through you unblest
Are Jove's twin sons. Nor have your vows procured
Of your dear country the enchanting sight.
A rumour too through various realms hath spread,
Caught by the envious vulgar with delight,
Assigning you to the barbarian's bed.
Amid the waves, far from the wished-for shore,
Your husband hath been buried in the main.
You shall behold your native walls no more
Nor under burnished roofs your wonted state maintain.

HELEN.

III.

What Phrygian artist on the top of Ide,
Or vagrant of a Grecian line,
Felled that inauspicious pine,
To frame the bark which Paris o'er the tide
Dared with barbaric oars to guide,
When to my palace, in an evil hour
Caught by beauty's magic power,
He came to seize me for his bride?
But crafty Venus, authoress of these broils,
Marched thither, leagued with death, t' annoy
Triumphant Greece and vanquished Troy,
(Wretch that I am, consumed with endless toils!)
And Juno seated on her golden throne,
Consort of thundering Jove,
Sent Hermes from the realms above,
Who found me, when I carelessly had strewn
Leaves plucked from roses in my vest,
As Minerva's votary drest;
He bore me through the paths of air
To this loathed, this dreary land,
Called Greece, and Priam's friends the strife to share,
And roused to bloody deeds each rival band;
Where Simois' current glides, my name
Hence is marked with groundless shame.

Chorus. Your woes I know are grievous: but to bear
With tranquil mind the necessary ills
Of life, is most expedient.

Helen. To what ills
Have I been subject, O my dear companions!
Did not my mother, as a prodigy
Which wondering mortals gaze at, bring me forth?
For neither Grecian nor barbaric dame
Till then produced an egg, in which her children
Enveloped lay, as they report, from Jove
Leda engendered. My whole life and all
That hath befallen me, but conspires to form
One series of miraculous events;
To Juno some, and to my beauty some,
Are owing. Would to Heaven, that, like a tablet

Whose picture is effaced, I could exchange
This form for one less comely, since the Greeks
Forgetting those abundant gifts showered down
By prosperous Fortune which I now possess,
Think but of what redounds not to my honour,
And still remember my ideal shame.
Whoever therefore, with one single species
Of misery is afflicted by the gods,
Although the weight of Heaven's chastising hand
Be grievous, may with fortitude endure
Such visitation: but by many woes
Am I oppressed, and first of all exposed
To slanderous tongues, although I ne'er have erred.
It were a lesser evil e'en to sin
Then be suspected falsely. Then the gods,
'Midst men of barbarous manners, placed me far
From my loved country: torn from every friend,
I languish here, to servitude consigned
Although of free born race: for 'midst barbarians
Are all enslaved but one, their haughty lord.
My fortunes had this single anchor left,
Perchance my husband might at length arrive
To snatch me from my woes; but he, alas!
Is now no more, my mother too is dead,
And I am deemed her murd'ress, though unjustly,
Yet am I branded with this foul reproach;
And she who was the glory of our house,
My daughter in the virgin state grown grey,
Still droops unwedded: my illustrious brothers,
Castor and Pollux, called the sons of Jove,
Are now no more. But I impute my death,
Crushed as I am by all these various woes,
Not to my own misdeeds, but to the power
Of adverse fortune only: this one danger
There yet remains, if at my native land
I should again arrive, they will confine me
In a close dungeon, thinking me that Helen
Who dwelt in Ilion, till she thence was borne
By Menelaus. Where my husband living,
We might have known each other, by producing
Those tokens to which none beside are privy:
But this will never be, nor can he e'er

Return in safety. To what purpose then
Do I still lengthen out this wretched being?
To what new fortunes am I still reserved?
Shall I select a husband, but to vary
My present ills, to dwell beneath the roof
Of a barbarian, at luxurious boards
With wealth abounding, seated? for the dame
Whom wedlock couples with the man she hates
Death is the best expedient. But with glory
How shall I die? the fatal noose appears
To be so base, that e'en in slaves 'tis held
Unseemly thus to perish; in the poniard
There's somewhat great and generous. But to me
Delays are useless: welcome instant death:
Into such depth of misery am I plunged.
For beauty renders other women blest,
But hath to me the source of ruin proved.

Chorus. O Helen, whosoe'er the stranger be
Who hither came, believe not that the whole
Of what he said, is truth

Helen. But in plain terms
Hath he announced my dearest husband's death.

Chorus. The false assertions which prevail, are many.

Helen. Clear is the language in which honest Truth
Loves to express herself.

Chorus. You are inclined
Rather to credit inauspicious tidings
Than those which are more favourable.

Helen. By fears
Encompassed, am I hurried to despair.

Chorus. What hospitable treatment have you found
Beneath these roofs?

Helen. All here, except the man
Who seeks to wed me, are my friends.

Chorus. You know
How then to act: leave this sepulchral gloom,

Helen. What are the counsels, or the cheering words
You wish to introduce?

Chorus. Go in, and question
The daughter of the Nereid, her who knows
All hidden truths, Theonoe, if your lord
Yet live, or view the solar beams no more:

And when you have learnt this, as suit your fortunes
Indulge your joys, or pour forth all your tears:
But ere you know aught fully, what avail
Your sorrows? therefore listen to my words;
Leaving this tomb, attend the maid: from her
Shall you know all. But why should you look farther
When truth is in these mansions to be found?
With you the doors I'll enter; we together
The royal virgin's oracles will hear.
For 'tis a woman's duty to exert
Her utmost efforts in a woman's cause.

Helen. My friends, your wholesome counsels I approve:
But enter ye these doors, that ye, within
The palace, my calamities may hear.

Chorus. You summon her who your commands obeys
Without reluctance.

Helen. Woeful day! ah me,
What lamentable tidings shall I hear?

Chorus. Forbear these plaintive strains, my dearest queen,
Nor with presaging soul anticipate
Evils to come.

Helen. What hath my wretched lord
Endured? Doth he yet view the light, the sun
Borne in his radiant chariot, and the paths
Of all the starry train? Or hath he shared
The common lot of mortals, is he plunged
Among the dead, beneath th' insatiate grave?

Chorus. O construe what time yet may bring to pass
In the most favourable terms.

Helen. On thee
I call to testify, and thee adjure,
Eurotas, on whose verdant margin grow
The waving reeds: O tell me, if my lord
Be dead, as fame avers.

Chorus. Why do you utter
These incoherent ditties?

Helen. Round my neck
The deadly noose will I entwine, or drive
With my own hand a poniard through my breast;
For I was erst the cause of bloody strife;
But now am I a victim, to appease
The wrath of those three goddesses who strove

On Ida's mount, when 'midst the stalls where fed
His lowing herds, the son of Priam waked
The sylvan reed, to celebrate my beauty.

Chorus. Cause these averted ills, ye gods, to light
On other heads; but, O my royal mistress,
May you be happy.

Helen. Thou, O wretched Troy,
To crimes which thou hast ne'er committed, ow'st
Thy ruin, and those horrible disasters
Thou hast endured. For as my nuptial gifts,
Hath Venus caused an intermingled stream
Of blood and tears to flow, she, griefs to griefs
And tears to tears hath added; all these sufferings
Have been the miserable Ilion's lot.
Of their brave sons the mothers were bereft
The virgin sisters of the mighty dead
Strewed their shorn tresses on Scamander's banks,
While, by repeated shrieks, victorious Greece
Her woes expressing, smote her laurelled head,
And with her nails deep furrowing tore her cheeks.
Happy Calisto, thou Arcadian nymph
Who didst ascend the couch of Jove, transformed
To a four-footed savage, far more blest
Art thou than she to whom I owe my birth:
For thou beneath the semblance of a beast,
Thy tender limbs with shaggy hide o'erspread,
And glaring with stern visage, by that change
Didst end thy griefs. She too whom Dian drove
Indignant from her choir, that hind whose horns
Were tipped with gold, the bright Titanian maid,
Daughter of Merops, to her beauty owed
That transformation: but my charms have ruined
Both Troy and the unhappy Grecian host.

[*Exeunt* HELEN *and* CHORUS.

MENELAUS.

O Pelops, in the strife on Pisa's field,
Who didst outstrip the fiery steeds that whirled
The chariot of Oenomaus, would to Heaven
That when thy severed limbs before the gods
Were at the banquet placed, thou then thy life
Amidst the blest immortal powers hadst closed,

Ere thou my father Atreus didst beget,
Whose issue by his consort Ærope
Were Agamemnon and myself, two chiefs
Of high renown. No ostentatious words
Are these; but such a numerous host, I deem,
As that which we to Ilion's shore conveyed,
Ne'er stemmed the tide before; these troops their king
Led not by force to combat, but bore rule
O'er Grecian youths his voluntary subjects,
And among these, some heroes, now no more,
May we enumerate; others from the sea
Who 'scaped with joy, and to their homes returned,
E'en after fame had classed them with the dead.
But I, most wretched, o'er the briny waves
Of ocean wander, since I have o'erthrown
The battlements of Troy, and though I wish
Again to reach my country; by the gods
Am I esteemed unworthy of such bliss.
E'en to the Libyan deserts have I sailed,
And traversed each inhospitable scene
Of brutal outrage; still as I approach
My country, the tempestuous winds repel me,
Nor hath a prosperous breeze from Heaven yet filled
My sails, to waft me to the Spartan coast:
And now a shipwrecked, miserable man,
Reft of my friends, I on these shores am cast,
My vessel hath been shivered 'gainst the rocks
Into a thousand fragments: on the keel,
The only part which yet remains entire
Of all that fabric, scarce could I and Helen,
Whom I from Troy have borne, escape with life
Through fortunes unforeseen: but of this land
And its inhabitants, the name I know not:
For with the crowd I blushed to intermingle
Lest they my squalid garments should observe,
Through shame my wants concealing. For the man
Of an exalted station, when assailed
By adverse fortune, having never learned
How to endure calamity, is plunged
Into a state far worse than he whose woes
Have been of ancient date. But pinching need
Torments me: for I have not either food

Or raiment to protect my shivering frame,
Which may be guessed from these vile rags I wear
Cast up from my wrecked vessel: for the sea
Hath swallowed up my robes, my tissued vests,
And every ensign of my former state.
Within the dark recesses of a cave
Having concealed my wife, that guilty cause
Of all my woes, and my surviving friends
Enjoined to guard her, hither am I come.
Alone, in quest of necessary aid
For my brave comrades whom I there have left,
If by my search I haply can obtain it,
I roam; but when I viewed this house adorned
With gilded pinnacles, and gates that speak
The riches of their owner, I advanced:
For I have hopes that from this wealthy mansion
I, somewhat for my sailors, shall obtain.
But they who want the necessary comforts
Of life, although they are disposed to aid us,
Yet have not wherewithal. Ho! who comes forth
From yonder gate, my doleful tale to bear
Into the house?

FEMALE SERVANT, MENELAUS.

F. Serv. Who at the threshold stands?
Wilt thou not hence depart, lest thy appearance
Before these doors give umbrage to our lords?
Else shalt thou surely die, because thou cam'st
From Greece, whose sons shall never hence return.
Mene. Well hast thou spoken, O thou aged dame.
Wilt thou permit me? For to thy behests
Must I submit: but suffer me to speak.
F. Serv. Depart: for 'tis my duty to permit
No Greek to enter this imperial dome.
Mene. Lift not thy hand against me, nor attempt
To drive me hence by force.
F. Serv. Thou wilt not yield
To my advice, thou therefore art to blame.
Mene. Carry my message to thy lords within.
F. Serv. I fear lest somewhat dreadful might ensue,
Should I repeat your words.

Mene. I hither come
A shipwrecked man, a stranger, one of those
Whom all hold sacred.
F. Serv. To some other house,
Instead of this, repair.
Mene. I am determined
To enter: but comply with my request.
F. Serv. Be well assured thou are unwelcome here,
And shalt ere long by force be driven away.
Mene. Alas! alas! where are my valiant troops?
F. Serv. Elsewhere, perhaps, thou wert a mighty man;
But here art thou no longer such.
Mene. O Fortune,
How am I galled with undeserved reproach!
F. Serv. Why are those eyelids moist with tears, why griev'st thou?
Mene. Because I once was happy.
F. Serv. Then depart,
And mingle social tears with those thou lov'st.
Mene. But what domain is this, to whom belong
These royal mansions?
F. Serv. Proteus here resides;
This land is Egypt.
Mene. Egypt? wretched me!
Ah, whither have I sailed!
F. Serv. But for what cause
Scorn'st thou the race of Nile?
Mene. I scorn them not:
My own disastrous fortunes I bewail.
F. Serv. Many are wretched, thou in this respect
Art nothing singular.
Mene. Is he, the king
Thou speak'st of, here within?
F. Serv. To him belongs
This tomb; his son is ruler of this land.
Mene. But where is he: abroad, or in the palace?
F. Serv. He's not within: but to the Greeks he bears
The greatest enmity.
Mene. Whence rose this hate,
Productive of such bitter fruits to me?
F. Serv. Beneath these roofs Jove's daughter Helen dwells.

Mene. What mean'st thou? Ha! what words with wonder fraught
Are these which thou hast uttered? O repeat them.
F. Serv. The child of Tyndarus, she who in the realm
Of Sparta erst abode.
Mene. Whence came she hither?
How can this be?
F. Serv. From Lacedæmon's realm.
Mene. When? Hath my wife been torn from yonder cave?
F. Serv. Before the Greeks, O stranger, went to Troy.
Retreat then from these mansions, for within
Hath happened a calamitous event,
By which the palace is disturbed. Thou com'st
Unseasonably, and if the king surprise thee,
Instead of hospitable treatment, death
Must be thy portion. To befriend the Greeks
Though well inclined, yet thee have I received
With these harsh words, because I fear the monarch.
[*Exit* FEMALE SERVANT.
Mene. What shall I say? For I, alas! am told
Of present sorrows added to the past.
Come I not hither, after having borne
From vanquished Troy my consort, whom I left
Within yon cave well guarded? Yet here dwells
Another Helen, whom that woman called
Jove's daughter. Lives there on the banks of Nile
A man who bears the sacred name of Jove?
For in the heavens there's only one. What country,
But that where glides Eurotas' stream beset
With waving reeds, is Sparta? Tyndarus' name
Suits him alone. But is there any land
Synonymous with Lacedæmon's realm,
And that of Troy? I know not how to solve
This doubt; for there are many, it appears,
In various regions of the world, who bear
Like appellations; city corresponds
With city; woman borrows that of woman:
Nor must we therefore wonder. Yet again
Here will I stay, though danger be announced
By yonder aged servant at the door:
For there is no man so devoid of pity

As not to give me food, when he the name
Of Menelaus hears. That dreadful fire
By which the Phrygian bulwarks were consumed
Is memorable, and I who kindled it
Am known in every land. I'll therefore wait
Until the master of this house return.
But I have two expedients, and will practise
That which my safety shall require; of soul
Obdurate, if he prove, in my wrecked bark
Can I conceal myself, but if the semblance
Which he puts on, be mild, I for relief
From these my present miseries, will apply.
But this of all the woes that I endure
Is the most grievous, that from other kings
I, though a king myself, should be reduced
To beg my food: but thus hath Fate ordained.
Nor is it my assertion, but a maxim
Among the wise established, that there's nought
More powerful than the dread behests of Fate.

Helen, Chorus, Menelaus.

Chorus. I heard what yon prophetic maid foretold,
Who in the palace did unfold
The oracles; that to the shades profound
Of Erebus, beneath the ground
Interred, not yet hath Menelaus ta'en
His passage: on the stormy main
Still tossed, he cannot yet approach the strand,
The haven of the Spartan land:
The chief, who now his vagrant life bewails,
Without a friend, unfurls his sails,
From Ilion's realm to every distant shore
Borne o'er the deep with luckless oar.

Helen. I to this hallowed tomb again repair,
Now I have heard the grateful tidings uttered
By sage Theonoe, who distinctly knows
All that hath happened? for she says my lord
Is living, and yet views the solar beams:
But after passing o'er unnumbered straits
Of ocean, to a vagrant's wretched life
Full long inured, on these Ægyptian coasts,
When he his toils hath finished, shall arrive.

Yet there is one thing more, which she hath left
Unmentioned, whether he shall come with safety.
This question I neglected to propose,
O'erjoyed when she informed me he yet lives;
She also adds, that he is near the land,
From his wrecked ship, with his few friends, cast forth,
O mayst thou come at length; for ever dear
To me wilt thou arrive. Ha! who is that?
Am not I caught, through some deceitful scheme
Of Proteus' impious son, in hidden snares?
Like a swift courser, or the madding priestess
Of Bacchus, shall I not with hasty step
Enter the tomb, because his looks are fierce
Who rushes on, and strives to overtake me?

Mene. On thee I call, who to the yawning trench
Around that tomb, and blazing altars hiest
Precipitate. Stay: wherefore dost thou fly?
With what amazement doth thy presence strike
And almost leave me speechless!

Helen. O my friends,
I suffer violence; for from the tomb
I by this man am dragged, who to the king
Will give me, from whose nuptial couch I fled.

Mene. We are no pirates, nor the ministers
Of lustful villany.

Helen. Yet is the vest
You wear unseemly.

Mene. Stay thy rapid flight,
Dismiss thy fears.

Helen. I stop, now I have reached
This hallowed spot.

Mene. Say, woman, who thou art;
What face do I behold?

Helen. But who are you?
For I by the same reasons am induced
To ask this question.

Mene. Never did I see
A greater likeness.

Helen. O ye righteous gods!
For 'tis a privilege the gods alone
Confer, to recognize our long-lost friends.

Mene. Art thou a Grecian or a foreign dame?
Helen. Of Greece: but earnestly I wish to know
Whence you derive your origin.
Mene. In thee
A wonderful resemblance I discern
Of Helen.
Helen. Menelaus' very features
These eyes in you behold, still at a loss
Am I for words t' express my thoughts.
Mene. Full clearly
Hast thou discovered a most wretched man.
Helen. O to thy consort's arms at length restored!
Mene. To what a consort? O forbear to touch
My garment!
Helen. E'en the same, whom to your arms,
A noble bride, my father Tyndarus gave.
Mene. Send forth, O Hecate, thou orb of light,
Some more benignant spectre.
Helen. You in me
Behold not one of those who minister
At Hecate's abhorred nocturnal rites.
Mene. Nor am I sure the husband of two wives.
Helen. Say, to whom else in wedlock are you joined?
Mene. To her who lies concealed in yonder cave,
The prize I hither bring from vanquished Troy.
Helen. You have no wife but me.
Mene. If I retain
My reason yet, these eyes are sure deceived.
Helen. Seem you not then, while me you thus behold,
To view your real consort?
Mene. Though your person
Resemble hers, no positive decision
Can I presume to form.
Helen. Observe me well,
And mark wherein we differ. Who can judge
With greater certainty than you?
Mene. Thou bear'st
Her semblance, I confess.
Helen. Who can inform you
Better than your own eyes?
Mene. What makes me doubt
Is this; because I have another wife.

Helen. To the domains of Troy I never went:
It was my image only.
Mene. Who can fashion
Such bodies, with the power of sight endued?
Helen. Composed of ether, you a consort have,
Heaven's workmanship.
Mene. Wrought by what plastic god?
For the events thou speak'st of are most wondrous.
Helen. Lest Paris should obtain me, this exchange
Was made by Juno.
Mene. How couldst thou be here,
At the same time, and in the Phrygian realm?
Helen. The name, but not the body, can be present
At once in many places.
Mene. O release me;
For I came hither in an evil hour.
Helen. Will you then leave me here, and bear away
That shadow of a wife?
Mene. Yet, O farewell,
Because thou art like Helen.
Helen. I'm undone:
For though my husband I again have found,
Yet shall not I possess him.
Mene. My conviction,
From all those grievous toils I have endured
At Ilion, I derive, and not from thee.
Helen. Ah, who is there more miserable than I am?
My dearest friends desert me: I, to Greece,
To my dear native land, shall ne'er return.

MESSENGER, MENELAUS, HELEN, CHORUS.

Mess. After a tedious search, O Menelaus,
At length have I with difficulty found you,
But not till over all the wide extent
Of this barbaric region I had wandered;
Sent by the comrades whom you left behind.
Mene. Have ye been plundered then by the barbarians?
Mess. A most miraculous event hath happened,
Yet less astonishing by far in name
Than in reality.
Mene. Speak, for thou bring'st
Important tidings by this breathless haste.

Mess. My words are these: in vain have you endured
Unnumbered toils.
Mene. Those thou bewail'st are ills
Of ancient date. But what hast thou to tell me?
Mess. Borne to the skies your consort from our sight
Hath vanished, in the heavens is she concealed,
Leaving the cave in which we guarded her,
When she these words had uttered: "O ye sons
Of hapless Phrygia, and of Greece: for me
Beside Scamander's conscious stream ye died,
Through Juno's arts, because ye falsely deemed
Helen by Phrygian Paris was possest:
But after having here remained on earth
My stated time, observing the decrees
Of Fate, I to my sire the liquid ether
Return: but Tyndarus' miserable daughter,
Though guiltless, hath unjustly been accused."
Daughter of Leda hail! wert thou then here?
While I as if thou to the starry paths
Hadst mounted, through my ignorance proclaimed
Thou from this world on rapid wings wert borne.
But I no longer will allow thee thus
To sport with the afflictions of thy friends;
For in thy cause thy lord and his brave troops
On Ilion's coast already have endured
Abundant toils.
Mene. These are the very words
She uttered; and by what ye both aver
The truth is ascertained. O happy day
Which gives thee to my arms!
Helen. My dearest lord,
O Menelaus, it is long indeed
Since I have seen you: but joy comes at last.
My friends, transported I receive my lord
Whom I once more with these fond arms enfold,
After the radiant chariot of the sun
Hath oft the world illumined.
Mene. I embrace
Thee too: but having now so much to say
I know not with what subject to begin.
Helen. Joy raises my exulting crest, these tears
Are tears of ecstasy, around your neck

My arms I fling with transport, O my husband,
O sight most wished for!

Mene. I acquit the Fates,
Since Jove's and Leda's daughter I possess,
On whom her brothers borne on milk-white steeds
Erst showered abundant blessings, when the torch
Was kindled at our jocund nuptial rite;
Though from my palace her the gods conveyed.
But evil now converted into good
To me thy husband hath at length restored
My long-lost consort: grant, O bounteous Heaven,
That I these gifts of fortune may enjoy.

Helen. May you enjoy them, for my vows concur
With yours; nor, of us two, can one be wretched
Without the other. O my friends, I groan
No longer, I no longer shed the tear
For my past woes: my husband I possess
Whom I from Troy expected to return
Full many, many years.

Mene. I still am thine,
And thee with these fond arms again enfold.
But oft the chariot of the sun revolved
Through his diurnal orbit, ere the frauds
Of Juno I discerned. Yet more from joy
Than from affliction rise the tears I shed.

Helen. What shall I say? what mortal could presume
E'er to have hoped for such a blest event?
An unexpected visitant once more
I clasp you to my bosom.

Mene. And I thee
Who didst appear to sail for Ida's town,
And Ilion's wretched turrets. By the gods,
Inform me, I conjure thee, by what means
Thou from my palace hither wert conveyed.

Helen. Alas! you to the source of all my woes
Ascend, and search into most bitter tidings.

Mene. Speak: for whate'er hath been ordained by Heaven
Ought to be published.

Helen. I abhor the topic
On which I now am entering.

Mene. Yet relate

All that thou know'st; for pleasing 'tis to hear
Of labours that are past.

Helen. I never went
To that barbarian youth's adulterous couch
By the swift oar impelled: but winged love
Those hapless spousals formed.

Mene. What god, what fate
Hath torn thee from thy country?

Helen. O my lord,
The son of Jove hath placed me on the banks
Of Nile.

Mene. With what amazement do I hear
This wondrous tale of thy celestial guide!

Helen. Oft have I wept, and still the tear bedews
These eyes: to Juno, wife of Jove, I owe
My ruin.

Mene. Wherefore wished she to have heaped
Mischiefs on thee?

Helen. Ye sources of whate'er
To me hath been most dreadful, O ye baths
And fountains, where those goddesses adorned
Their rival beauties, from whose influence rose
That judgment!

Mene. Were those curses on thy head
By Juno showered, that judgment to requite?

Helen. To rescue me from Venus.

Mene. What thou mean'st
Inform me.

Helen. Who to Paris had engaged——

Mene. O wretched woman!

Helen. Wretched, wretched me!
Thus did she waft me to th' Egyptian coast.

Mene. Then in thy stead to him that image gave,
As thou inform'st me.

Helen. But alas! what woes
Thence visited our wretched house! ah mother!
Ah me!

Mene. What sayst thou?

Helen. Leda is no more.
Around her neck she fixed the deadly noose
On my account, through my unhappy nuptials
O'erwhelmed with foul disgrace.

Mene. Alas! But lives
Hermione our daughter?
Helen. Yet unwedded,
Yet childless, O my husband, she bewails
My miserable 'spousals, my disgrace.
Mene. O Paris, who hast utterly o'erthrown
All my devoted house, these curst events,
Both thee, and myriads of the Grecian troops
With brazen arms refulgent, have destroyed,
Helen. But from my country in an evil hour,
From my loved native city, and from you,
Me hath the goddess driven, a wretch accursed
In that I left our home, and bridal bed,
Which yet I left not, for those base espousals.
Chorus. If ye hereafter meet with happier fortune,
This may atone for all ye have endured
Already.
Mess. To me too, O Menelaus,
Communicate a portion of that joy
Which I perceive, but know not whence it springs.
Mene. Thou too, old man, shalt in our conference share.
Mess. Was not she then the cause of all the woes
Endured at Troy?
Mene. Not she: we were deceived
By those immortal Powers, whose plastic hand
Moulded a cloud into that baleful image.
Mess. What words are these you utter? have we toiled
In vain, and only for an empty cloud?
Mene. These deeds were wrought by Juno, and the strife
'Twixt the three goddesses.
Mess. But is this woman
Indeed your wife?
Mene. E'en she: and thou for this
On my assertion safely mayst depend.
Mess. My daughter, O how variable is Jove,
And how inscrutable! for he with ease
Whirls us around, now here, now there; one suffers
Full many toils; another, who ne'er knew
What sorrow was, is swallowed up at once
In swift perdition, nor in Fortune's gifts
A firm and lasting tenure doth enjoy.
Thou and thy husband have endured a war,

Of slander thou, but he of pointed spears:
For by the tedious labours he endured
He nothing could obtain, but now obtains
The greatest and the happiest of all boons,
Which comes to him unsought. Thou hast not shamed
Thy aged father, and the sons of Jove,
Nor acted as malignant rumour speaks.
I now renew thy hymeneal rite,
And still am mindful of the torch I bore,
Running before the steeds, when in a car
Thou with this favoured bridegroom wert conveyed
From thy paternal mansion's happy gates.
For worthless is that servant who neglects
His master's interests, nor partakes their joys,
Nor feels for their afflictions. I was born
Indeed a slave, yet I with generous slaves
Would still be numbered, for although the name
I bear is abject, yet my soul is free.
Far better this, than if I had at once
Suffered two evils, a corrupted heart,
And vile subjection to another's will.

Mene. Courage, old man: for thou hast borne my shield,
And in my cause endured unnumbered toils,
Sharing my dangers: now partake my joys;
Go tell the friends I left, what thou hast seen,
And our auspicious fortunes: on the shore
Bid them remain, till our expected conflict
Is finished; and observe how we may sail
From this loathed coast; that, with our better fortune
Conspiring, we, if possible, may 'scape
From these barbarians.

Mess. Your commands, O king,
Shall be obeyed. But I perceive how vain
And how replete with falsehood is the voice
Of prophets: no dependence can be placed
Upon the flames that from the altar rise,
Or on the voices of the feathered choir.
It is the height of folly to suppose
That birds are able to instruct mankind.
For Calchas, to the host, nor by his words
Nor signs, declared, "I for a cloud behold
My friends in battle slain." The seer was mute,

And Troy in vain was taken. But perhaps
You will rejoin, "'Twas not the will of Heaven
That he should speak." Why then do we consult
These prophets? We by sacrifice should ask
For blessings from the gods, and lay aside
All auguries. This vain delusive bait
Was but invented to beguile mankind.
No sluggard e'er grew rich by divination,
The best of seers are Prudence and Discernment.
[*Exit* MESSENGER.

Chorus. My sentiments on prophets well accord
With those of this old man. He whom the gods
Th' immortal gods befriend, in his own house
Hath a response that never can mislead.

Helen. So be it. All thus far is well. But how
You came with safety, O unhappy man,
From Troy, 'twill nought avail for me to know;
Yet with the sorrows of their friends, have friends
A wish to be acquainted.

Mene Thou hast asked
A multitude of questions in one short
And blended sentence. Why should I recount
To thee our sufferings on the Ægean deep,
Those treacherous beacons, by the vengeful hand
Of Nauplius kindled on Eubœa's rocks,
The towns of Crete, or in the Libyan realm,
Which I have visited, and the famed heights
Of Perseus? never could my words assuage
Thy curiosity, and, by repeating
My woes to thee, I should but grieve the more,
And yet a second time those sufferings feel.

Helen. You in your answer have been more discreet
Than I who such a question did propose.
But pass o'er all beside, and only tell me
How long you wandered o'er the briny main.

Mene. Year after year, besides the ten at Troy,
Seven tedious revolutions of the sun.

Helen. The time you speak of, O unhappy man,
Is long indeed: but from those dangers saved
You hither come to bleed.

Mene. What words are these?
What dost thou mean? O, how hast thou undone me

Helen. Fly from these regions with your utmost speed:
Or he to whom this house belongs will slay you.
Mene. What have I done that merits such a fate?
Helen. You hither come an unexpected guest,
And are a hindrance to my bridal rite.
Mene. Is there a man then who presumes to wed
My consort?
Helen. And with arrogance to treat me,
Which I, alas! have hitherto endured.
Mene. Of private rank, in his own strength alone
Doth he confide, or rules he o'er the land?
Helen. Lord of this region, royal Proteus' son.
Mene. This is the very riddle which I heard
From yonder female servant.
Helen. At which gate
Of this barbarian palace did you stand?
Mene. Here, whence I like a beggar was repelled.
Helen. What, did you beg for food! ah wretched me!
Mene. The fact was thus: though I that abject name
Assumed not.
Helen. You then know, it seems, the whole
About my nuptials.
Mene. This I know: but whether
Thou has escaped th' embraces of the king
I still am uninformed.
Helen. That I have kept
Your bed still spotless, may you rest assured.
Mene. How canst thou prove the fact? if thou speak truth
To me, it will give pleasure.
Helen. Do you see,
Close to the tomb, my miserable seat?
Mene. I on the ground behold a couch: but what
Hast thou to do with that, O wretched woman?
Helen. Here I a suppliant bowed, that I might 'scape
From those espousals.
Mene. Couldst thou find no altar,
Or dost thou follow the barbarian mode?
Helen. Equally with the temples of the gods
Will this protect me.
Mene. Is not then my bark
Allowed to waft thee to the Spartan shore?

Helen. Rather the sword than Helen's bridal bed
Awaits you.
Mene. Thus should I of all mankind
Be the most wretched.
Helen. Let not shame prevent
Your 'scaping from this land.
Mene. And leaving thee,
For whom I laid the walls of Ilion waste?
Helen. 'Twere better than to perish in the cause
Of me your consort.
Mene. Such unmanly deeds
As these thou speak'st of would disgrace the chief
Who conquered Troy.
Helen. You cannot slay the king,
Which is perhaps the project you have formed.
Mene. Hath he then such a body as no steel
Can penetrate?
Helen. My reasons you shall know.
But it becomes not a wise man t' attempt
What cannot be performed.
Mene. Shall I submit
My hands in silence to the galling chain?
Helen. You know not how to act in these dire straits
To which we are reduced: but of some plot
Must we avail ourselves.
Mene. 'Twere best to die
In some brave action than without a conflict.
Helen. One only hope of safety yet remains.
Mene. By gold can it be purchased, or depends it
On dauntless courage, or persuasive words?
Helen. Of your arrival if the monarch hear not.
Mene. Who can inform him? he will never sure
Know who I am.
Helen. He hath a sure associate,
Within his palace, equal to the gods.
Mene. Some voice which from its inmost chambers sounds?
Helen. No: 'tis his sister, her they call Theonoe
Mene. She bears indeed a most prophetic name;
But say, what mighty deeds can she perform?
Helen. All things she knows, and will inform her brother
That you are here.

Mene. We both, alas! must die,
Nor can I possibly conceal myself.
Helen. Could our united supplications move her?
Mene. To do what action? Into what vain hope
Wouldst thou mislead me?
Helen. Not to tell her brother
That you are in the land.
Mene. If we prevail
Thus far, can we escape from these domains?
Helen. With ease, if she concur in our design,
But not without her knowledge.
Mene. This depends
On thee: for woman best prevails with woman.
Helen. Around her knees these suppliant hands I'll twine.
Mene. Go then; but what if she reject our prayer?
Helen. You certainly must die; and I by force
Shall to the king be wedded.
Mene. Thou betray'st me
That force thou talk'st of is but mere pretence.
Helen. But by your head that sacred oath I swear.
Mene. What sayst thou, wilt thou die, and never change
Thy husband?
Helen. By the self-same sword: my corse
Shall lie beside you.
Mene. To confirm the words
Which thou hast spoken, take my hand.
Helen. I take
Your hand, and swear that after you are dead
I will not live.
Mene. And I will put an end
To my existence, if deprived of thee.
Helen. But how shall we die so as to procure
Immortal glory?
Mene. Soon as on the tomb
Thee I have slain, myself will I destroy.
But first a mighty conflict shall decide
Our claims who to thy bridal bed aspire.
Let him who dares, draw near: for the renown
I won at Troy, I never will belie,
Nor yet returning to the Grecian shore
Suffer unnumbered taunts for having reft
Thetis of her Achilles, and beheld

Ajax the Telamonian hero slain,
With Neleus' grandson, though I dare not bleed
To save my consort. Yet on thy behalf
Without regret, will I surrender up
This fleeting life: for if the gods are wise
They lightly scatter dust upon the tomb
Of the brave man who by his foes is slain,
But pile whole mountains on the coward's breast.

Chorus. O may the race of Tantalus, ye gods,
At length be prosperous, may their sorrows cease!

Helen. Wretch that I am! for such is my hard fate:
O Menelaus, we are lost for ever.
The prophetess Theonoe, from the palace
Comes forth: I hear the sounding gates unbarred.
Fly from this spot. But whither can you fly?
For your arrival here, full well she knows,
Absent, or present. How, O wretched me,
Am I undone! in safety you return
From Troy, from a barbarian land, to rush
Again upon the swords of fresh barbarians.

THEONOE, MENELAUS, HELEN, CHORUS.

Theonoe [*to one of her Attendants*].
Lead thou the way, sustaining in thy hand
The kindled torch, and fan the ambient air,
Observing every due and solemn rite,
That we may breathe the purest gales of Heaven.
Meanwhile do thou, if any impious foot
Have marked the path, with lustral flames efface
The taint, and wave the pitchy brand around,
That I may pass; and when we have performed
Our duteous homage to th' immortal powers,
Into the palace let the flame be borne,
Restore it to the Lares. What opinion
Have you, O Helen, of th' events foretold
By my prophetic voice? Your husband comes,
Your Menelaus in this land appears,
Reft of his ships, and of your image reft.
'Scaped from what dangers, O unhappy man,
Art thou arrived, although thou know'st not yet
Whether thou e'er shalt to thy home return,
Or here remain. For there is strife in Heaven;

And Jove on thy account this day will hold
A council; Juno who was erst thy foe,
Now grown benignant, with thy consort safe
To Sparta would convey thee, that all Greece
May understand that the fictitious nuptials
Of Paris, were the baleful gift of Venus.
But Venus wants to frustrate thy return,
Lest she should be convicted, or appear
At least the palm of beauty to have purchased
By vending Helen for a wife to Paris.
But this important question to decide,
On me depends; I either can destroy thee,
Which is the wish of Venus, by informing
My brother thou art here; or save thy life
By taking Juno's side, and thy arrival
Concealing from my brother, who enjoined me
To inform him whensoe'er thou on these shores
Shouldst land. Who bears the tidings to my brother.
That Menelaus' self is here, to save me
From his resentment?

Helen. At thy knees I fall,
O virgin, as a suppliant, and here take
My miserable seat, both for myself,
And him whom, scarce restored to me, I see
Now on the verge of death. Forbear t' inform
Thy brother, that to these fond arms my lord
Again is come. O save him, I implore thee;
Nor gratify thy brother, by betraying
The feelings of humanity, to purchase
A wicked and unjust applause: for Jove
Detests all violence, he bids us use
What we possess, but not increase our stores
By rapine. It is better to be poor,
Than gain unrighteous wealth. For all mankind
Enjoy these common blessings, Air and Earth;
Nor ought we our own house with gold to fill,
By keeping fraudfully another's right,
Or seizing it by violence. For Hermes,
Commissioned by the blest immortal powers,
Hath, at my cost, consigned me to thy sire,
To keep me for this husband, who is here
And claims me back again: but by what means

Can he receive me after he is dead?
Or how can the Ægyptian king restore me
A living consort to my breathless lord?
Consider therefore, both the will of Heaven
And that of thy great father. Would the god,
Would the deceased, surrender up or keep
Another's right? I deem they would restore it.
Hence to thy foolish brother shouldst not thou
Pay more respect than to thy virtuous sire.
And sure if thou, a prophetess, who utter'st
Th' oracular responses of the gods,
Break'st through thy father's justice, to comply
With an unrighteous brother: it were base
In thee to understand each mystic truth
Revealed by the immortal powers, the things
That are, and those that are not; yet o'erlook
The rules of justice. But O stoop to save
Me, miserable me, from all those ills
In which I am involved; this great exertion
Of thy benignant aid, my fortunes claim.
For there is no man who abhors not Helen;
'Tis rumoured through all Greece that I betrayed
My husband, and abode beneath the roofs
Of wealthy Phrygia. But to Greece once more
Should I return and to the Spartan realm;
When they are told, and see, how to the arts
Of these contending goddesses they owe
Their ruin; but that I have to my friends
Been ever true, they to the rank I held
'Midst chaste and virtuous matrons, will restore me:
My daughter too, whom no man dares to wed,
From me her bridal portion shall receive;
And I, no longer doomed to lead the life
Of an unhappy vagrant, shall enjoy
The treasures that our palaces contain.
Had Menelaus died, and been consumed
In the funereal pyre, I should have wept
For him far distant in a foreign realm;
But now shall I for ever be bereft
Of him who lives, and seem to have escaped
From every danger. Virgin, act not thus;
To thee I kneel a suppliant; O confer

On me this boon, and emulate the justice
Of your great sire. For fair renown attends
The children, from a virtuous father sprung,
Who equal their hereditary worth.

Theonoe. Most piteous are the words which you have spoken;
You also claim my pity: but I wish
To hear what Menelaus yet can plead
To save his life.

Mene. I cannot at your knees
Fall prostrate, or with tears these eyelids stain:
For I should cover all the great exploits
Which I achieved at Ilion with disgrace,
If I became a dastard; though some hold
'Tis not unworthy of the brave to weep
When wretched. But this honourable part
(If such a part can e'er be honourable)
I will not act, because the prosperous fortunes
Which erst were mine, are present to my soul.
If then you haply are disposed to save
A foreigner who justly claims his wife,
Restore her, and protect us: if you spurn
Our suit, I am not now for the first time,
But have been often wretched, and your name
Shall be recorded as an impious woman.
These thoughts, which I hold worthy of myself,
And just, and such as greatly must affect
Your inmost heart, I at your father's tomb
With energy will utter. Good old man,
Beneath this marble sepulchre who dwell'st,
To thee I sue, restore my wife, whom Jove
Sent hither to thy realm, that thou for me
Might'st guard her. Thou, I know, since thou art dead,
Canst ne'er have power to give her back again:
But she, this holy priestess, will not suffer
Reproach to fall on her illustrious sire,
Whom I invoke amid the shades beneath:
For this depends on her. Thee too I call,
O Pluto, to my aid, who hast received
Full many a corse, which fell in Helen's cause
Beneath my sword, and still retain'st the prize:

Either restore them now to life, or force
Her who seems mightier than her pious father,
To give me back my wife. But of my consort
If ye resolve to rob me, I will urge
Those arguments which Helen hath omitted.
Know then, O virgin, first I by an oath
Have bound myself, your brother to encounter,
And he, or I, must perish; the plain truth
Is this. But foot to foot in equal combat,
If he refuse to meet me, and attempt
To drive us suppliants from the tomb by famine,
My consort will I slay, and with the sword
Here on this sepulchre my bosom pierce,
That the warm current of our blood may stream
Into the grave. Thus shall our corses lie
Close to each other on this polished marble:
To you eternal sorrow shall they cause,
And foul reproach to your great father's name.
For neither shall your brother wed my Helen,
Nor any man beside: for I with me
Will bear her; if I cannot bear her home,
Yet will I bear her to the shades beneath.
But why complain? If I shed tears, and act
The woman's part, I rather shall become
An object of compassion, than deserve
To be esteemed a warrior. If you list,
Slay me, for I can never fall inglorious.
But rather yield due credence to my words,
So will you act with justice, and my wife
Shall I recover.

Chorus. To decide the cause
On which we speak, belongs to thee, O virgin:
But so decide as to please all.

Theonoe. By nature
And inclination am I formed to act
With piety, myself too I revere:
Nor will I e'er pollute my sire's renown,
Or gratify my brother by such means
As might make me seem base. For from my birth,
Hath justice in this bosom fixed her shrine:
And since from Nereus I inherited
This temper, Menelaus will I strive

To save. But now since Juno is disposed
To be your friend, with her will I accord:
May Venus be propitious, though her rites
I never have partaken, and will strive
For ever to remain a spotless maid.
But I concur with thee, O Menelaus,
In all thou to my father at his tomb
Hast said: for with injustice should I act
If I restored not Helen: had he lived,
My sire on thee again would have bestowed
Thy consort, and her former lord on Helen.
For vengeance, in the shades of Hell beneath,
And among all that breathe the vital air,
Attends on those who break their plighted trust.
The soul of the deceased, although it live
Indeed no longer, yet doth still retain
A consciousness which lasts for ever, lodged
In the eternal scene of its abode,
The liquid ether. To express myself
Concisely, all that you requested me
Will I conceal, nor with my counsels aid
My brother's folly; I to him shall show
A real friendship, though without the semblance,
If I his vicious manners can reform
And make him more religious. Therefore find
Means to escape yourselves; for I will hence
Depart in silence. First implore the gods;
To Venus sue, that she your safe return
Would suffer; and to Juno, not to change
The scheme which she hath formed, both to preserve
Your lord and you. O my departed sire,
For thee will I exert my utmost might,
That on thy honoured name no foul reproach
May ever rest. [*Exit* THEONOE.

Chorus. No impious man e'er prospered:
But fairest hopes attend an honest cause.

Helen. O Menelaus, as to what depends
Upon the royal maid, are we secure:
But next doth it become you to propose
Some means our safety to effect.

Mene. Now listen

To me; thou in this palace long hast dwelt,
An inmate with the servants of the king.
Helen. Why speak you thus? for you raise hopes as though
You could do somewhat for our common good.
Mene. Canst thou prevail on any one of those
Who guide the harnessed steeds, to furnish us
With a swift car?
Helen. Perhaps I might succeed
In that attempt. But how shall we escape
Who to these fields and this barbarian land
Are strangers? An impracticable thing
Is this you speak of.
Mene. Well, but in the palace
Concealed, if with this sword the king I slay.
Helen. His sister will not suffer this in silence
If you attempt aught 'gainst her brother's life.
Mene. We have no ship in which we can escape;
For that which we brought hither, by the waves
Is swallowed up.
Helen. Now hear what I propose;
From woman's lips if wisdom ever flow.
Will you permit a rumour of your death
To be dispersed?
Mene. This were an evil omen:
But I, if any benefit arise
From such report, consent to be called dead
While I yet live.
Helen. That impious tyrant's pity
Our female choir shall move, with tresses shorn,
And chaunt funereal strains.
Mene. What tendency
Can such a project have to our deliverance?
Helen. I will allege that 'tis an ancient custom;
And of the monarch his permission crave,
That I on you, as if you in the sea
Had perished, may bestow a vacant tomb.
Mene. If he consent, how can this feigned interment
Enable us to fly without a ship?
Helen. I will command a bark to be prepared,
From whence into the bosom of the deep
Funereal trappings I may cast.
Mene. How well

And wisely hast thou spoken! but the tomb
If he direct thee on the strand to raise,
Nought can this scheme avail.

Helen. But I will say
'Tis not the usage, in a Grecian realm,
With earth to cover the remains of those
Who perished in the waves.

Mene. Thou hast again
Removed this obstacle: I then with thee
Will sail, and the funereal trappings place
In the same vessel.

Helen. 'Tis of great importance
That you, and all those mariners who 'scaped
The shipwreck, should be present.

Mene. If we find
A bark at anchor, with our falchions armed
In one collected band will we assail
And board it.

Helen. To direct all this, belongs
To you; but may the prosperous breezes fill
Our sails, and guide us o'er the billowy deep.

Mene. These vows shall be accomplished; for the gods
At length will cause my toils to cease: but whence
Wilt thou pretend thou heard'st that I was dead?

Helen. Yourself shall be the messenger; relate
How you alone escaped his piteous doom,
A partner of the voyage with the son
Of Atreus, and the witness of his death.

Mene. This tattered vest will testify my shipwreck.

Helen. How seasonable was that which seemed at first
To be a grievous loss! but the misfortune
May end perhaps in bliss.

Mene. Must I with thee
Enter the palace, or before this tomb
Sit motionless?

Helen. Here stay: for if the king
By force should strive to tear you hence, this tomb
And your drawn sword will save you. But I'll go
To my apartment, shear my flowing hair,
For sable weeds this snowy vest exchange,
And rend with bloody nails these livid cheeks:
For 'tis a mighty conflict, and I see

These two alternatives: if in my plots
Detected, I must die; or to my country
I shall return, and save your life. O Juno,
Thou sacred queen, who shar'st the couch of Jove,
Relieve two wretches from their toils; to thee
Our suppliant arms uplifting high t'wards Heaven
With glittering stars adorned, thy blest abode,
We sue: and thou, O Venus, who didst gain
The palm of beauty through my promised 'spousals,
Spare me, thou daughter of Dione, spare;
For thou enough hast injured me already;
Exposing not my person, but my name,
To those barbarians; suffer me to die,
If thou wilt slay me, in my native land.
Why art thou still insatiably malignant?
Why dost thou harass me by love, by fraud,
By the invention of these new deceits,
And by thy magic philtres plunge in blood
Our miserable house? If thou hadst ruled
With mildness, thou to man hadst been most grateful
Of all the gods. I speak not this at random.

[HELEN *and* MENELAUS *retire behind the tomb.*

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

On thee who build'st thy tuneful seat
Protected by the leafy groves, I call,
O nightingale, thy accents ever sweet
Their murmuring melancholy fall
Prolong! O come, and with thy plaintive strain
Aid me to utter my distress,
Thy woes, O Helen, let the song express,
And those of Troy now levelled with the plain
By Grecian might. From hospitable shores,
Relying on barbaric oars,
The spoiler Paris fled,
And o'er the deep to Priam's realm with pride
Before his imaginary bride,
Fancying that thou hadst graced his bed,
To nuptials fraught with shame by wanton Venus led.

I. 2.

Unnumbered Greeks, transpierced with spears,
Or crushed beneath the falling ramparts, bled:
Hence with her tresses shorn, immersed in tears
The matron wails her lonely bed,
But Nauplius, kindling near th' Eubœan deep
Those torches, o'er our host prevailed;
Though with a single bark the traitor sailed,
He wrecked whole fleets against Caphareus' steep,
And the Ægean coasts, the beacon seemed
A star, and through Heaven's conclave gleamed,
Placed on the craggy height.
While flushed with conquest, from the Phrygian strand
They hastened to their native land,
Portentous source of bloody fight,
The cloud by Juno formed, beguiled their dazzled sight.

II. 1.

Whether the image was divine,
Drew from terrestrial particles its birth,
Or from the middle region, how define
By curious search, ye sons of earth?
Far from unravelling Heaven's abstruse intents,
We view the world tost to and fro,
Mark strange vicissitudes of joy and woe,
Discordant and miraculous events.
Thou, Helen, art indeed the child of Jove.
The swan, thy sire, inflamed by love,
To Leda's bosom flew:
Yet with imputed crimes malignant fame
Through Greece arraigns thy slandered name.
Of men I know not whom to trust,
But what the gods pronounce have I found ever just.

II. 2.

Frantic are ye who seek renown
Amid the horrors of th' embattled field,
Who masking guilt beneath a laurel crown
With nervous arm the falchion wield,
Not slaughtered thousands can your fury sate.
If still success the judgment guide,
If bloody battle right and wrong decide,

Incessant strife must vex each rival state:
Hence from her home departs each Phrygian wife,
O Helen, when the cruel strife
Which from thy charms arose,
One conference might have closed: now myriads dwell
With Pluto in the shades of Hell,
And flames, as when Jove's vengeance throws
The bolt, have caught her towers and finished Ilion's woes.

THEOCLYMENUS, CHORUS (HELEN *and* MENELAUS *behind the tomb*).

Theocly. Hail, O thou tomb of my illustrious sire!
For thee have I interred before my gate,
That with thy shade I might hold frequent conference
O Proteus; Theoclymenus thy son
Thee, O my father, oft as he goes forth,
Oft as he enters these abodes, accosts.
But to the palace now convey those hounds
And nets, my servants. I full many a time
Have blamed myself, because I never punished
With death such miscreants; now I am informed
That publicly some Greek to these domains
Is come unnoticed by my guards, a spy,
Or one who means to carry Helen off
By stealth: but if I seize him, he shall die.
Methinks I find all over: for the daughter
Of Tyndarus sits no longer at the tomb,
But from these shores hath fled, and now is crossing
The billowy deep. Unbar the gates, bring forth
My coursers from the stalls, and brazen cars;
Lest through my want of vigilance the dame
Whom I would make my consort, should escape me,
Borne from this land. Yet stay; for I behold
Those we pursue still here beneath this roof,
Nor are they fled. Ho! why in sable vest
Hast thou arrayed thyself, why cast aside
Thy robes of white, and from thy graceful head
With ruthless steel thy glowing ringlets shorn,
And wherefore bathed thy cheek with recent tears?
Groan'st thou, by visions of the night apprized
Of some calamity, or hast thou heard
Within, a rumour that afflicts thy soul?

Helen. My lord (for I already by that name
Accost you), I am utterly undone,
My former bliss is vanished, and I now
Am nothing.
Theocly. Art thou plunged into distress
So irretrievable? what cruel fate
Hath overtaken thee?
Helen. My Menelaus,
(Ah, how shall I express myself?) is dead.
Theocly. Although I must not triumph in th' event
Thou speak'st of, yet to me 'tis most auspicious.
How know'st thou? Did Theonoe tell thee this?
Helen. She and this mariner, who when he perished
Was present, both concur in the same tale.
Theocly. Is there a man arrived, who for the truth
Of that account can vouch?
Helen. He is arrived:
And would to Heaven that such auspicious fortune
As I could wish attended him.
Theocly. Who is he?
Where is he? I would know the real fact.
Helen. 'Tis he who stupefied with sorrow sits
Upon the tomb.
Theocly. In what unseemly garb
Is he arrayed, O Phœbus!
Helen. In that dress,
Ah me! methinks my husband I behold.
Theocly. But in what country was the stranger born,
And whence did he come hither?
Helen. He's a Greek,
One of those Greeks who with my husband sailed.
Theocly. How doth he say that Menelaus died?
Helen. Most wretchedly, engulfed amid the waves.
Theocly. Where? as he passed o'er the barbarian seas?
Helen. Dashed on the rocks of Libya, which affords
No haven.
Theocly. But whence happened it, that he
This partner of his voyage did not perish?
Helen. The worthless are more prosperous than the brave.
Theocly. Where left he the wrecked fragments of his ship
When he came hither?
Helen. There, where would to Heaven

Perdition had o'ertaken him, and spared
The life of Menelaus.

Theocly. He, it seems,
Is then no more: but in what bark arrived
This messenger?

Helen. Some sailors, as he says,
By chance passed by, and snatched him from the waves.

Theocly. But where's that hateful pest which in thy stead
Was sent to Ilion?

Helen. Speak you of a cloud,
Resembling me? it mounted to the skies.

Theocly. O Priam, for how frivolous a cause
Thou with thy Troy didst perish!

Helen. In their woes
I too have been involved.

Theocly. But did he leave
Thy husband's corse unburied, or strew dust
O'er his remains?

Helen. He left them uninterred,
Ah, wretched me!

Theocly. And didst thou for this cause
Sever the ringlets of thy auburn hair?

Helen. Still is he dear, lodged in this faithful breast

Theocly. Hast thou sufficient reason then to weep
For this calamity?

Helen. Could you bear lightly
Your sister's death?

Theocly. No surely. But what means
Thy still residing at this marble tomb?

Helen. Why do you harass me with taunting words,
And why disturb the dead?

Theocly. Because, still constant
To thy first husband, from my love thou fliest.

Helen. But I will fly no longer: haste, begin
The nuptial rite.

Theocly. 'Twas long ere thou didst come
To this: but I such conduct must applaud.

Helen. Know you then how to act? let us forget
All that has passed.

Theocly. Upon what terms? with kindness
Should kindness be repaid.

Helen. Let us conclude
The peace, and O be reconciled.
Theocly. All strife
With thee I to the winds of heaven consign.
Helen. Now, since you are my friend, I by those knees
Conjure you.
Theocly. With what object in thy view,
To me an earnest suppliant dost thou bend?
Helen. I my departed husband would inter.
Theocly. What tomb can be bestowed upon the absent
Wouldst thou inter his shade?
Helen. There is a custom
Among the Greeks established, that the man
Who in the ocean perishes——
Theocly. What is it?
For in such matters Pelops' race are wise.
Helen. To bury in their stead an empty vest.
Theocly. Perform funereal rites, and heap the tomb
On any ground thou wilt.
Helen. We in this fashion
Bury not the drowned mariner.
Theocly. How then?
I am a stranger to the Grecian customs.
Helen. Each pious gift due to our breathless friends
We cast into the sea.
Theocly. On the deceased
What presents for thy sake can I bestow?
Helen. I know not: for in offices like these
Am I unpractised, having erst been happy.
Theocly. An acceptable message have you brought,
O stranger.
Mene. Most ungrateful to myself
And the deceased.
Theocly. What funereal rites on those
Ocean hath swallowed up, do ye bestow?
Mene. Such honours as each individual's wealth
Enables us to pay him.
Theocly. Name the cost,
And for her sake receive whate'er you will.
Mene. Blood is our first libation to the dead.
Theocly. What blood? inform me, for with your instructions
I will comply.

Mene. Determine that thyself,
For whatsoe'er thou giv'st will be sufficient.
Theocly. The customary victims 'mong barbarians
Are either horse or bull.
Mene. Whate'er thou giv'st,
Let it be somewhat princely.
Theocly. My rich herds
With these are amply furnished.
Mene. And the bier
Without the corse is borne in solemn state.
Theocly. It shall: but what is there beside which custom
Requires to grace the funeral.
Mene. Brazen arms:
For war was what he loved.
Theocly. We will bestow
Such presents as are worthy of the race
Of mighty Pelops.
Mene. And those budding flowers
Th' exuberant soil produces.
Theocly. But say, how
And in what manner ye these offerings plunge
Into the ocean.
Mene. We must have a bark
And mariners to ply the oars.
Theocly. How far
Will they launch forth the vessel from the strand?
Mene. So far as from the shore thou scarce wilt see
The keel divide the waves.
Theocly. But why doth Greece
Observe this usage?
Mene. Lest the rising billows
Cast back to land th' ablutions.
Theocly. Ye shall have
A swift Phœnician vessel.
Mene. This were kind,
And no small favour shown to Menelaus.
Theocly. Without her presence, cannot you perform
These rites alone?
Mene. Such task or to a mother,
Or wife, or child, belongs.
Theocly. 'Tis then her duty,
You say, to bury her departed lord?

Mene. Sure, piety instructs us not to rob
The dead of their accustomed dues.
Theocly. Enough:
On me it is incumbent to promote
Such virtue in my consort. I will enter
The palace, and from thence for the deceased
Bring forth rich ornaments; with empty hands
You from this region will not I send forth,
That you may execute what she desires.
But having brought me acceptable tidings,
Instead of these vile weeds shall you receive
A decent garb and food, that to your country
You may return: for clearly I perceive
That you are wretched now. But torture not
Thy bosom with unprofitable cares,
O hapless woman, for thy Menelaus
Is now no more, nor can the dead revive.
Mene. Thee it behoves, O blooming dame, to love
Thy present husband, and to lay aside
The fond remembrance of thy breathless lord;
For such behaviour suits thy fortunes best.
But if to Greece with safety I return,
That infamy which erst pursued thy name
I'll cause to cease, if thou acquit thyself
Of these great duties like a virtuous consort.
Helen. I will; nor shall my husband e'er have cause
To blame me: you too, who are here, shall witness
The truth of my assertions. But within
Go lave your wearied limbs, O wretched man,
And change your habit; for without delay
To you will I become a benefactress.
Hence too with greater zeal will you perform
The rites my dearest Menelaus claims,
If all due honours you from me receive.
[*Exeunt* THEOCLYMENUS, HELEN, *and* MENELAUS.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O'er mountains erst with hasty tread
Did the celestial mother stray,

Nor stop where branching thickets spread,
Where rapid torrents crossed her way,
Or on the margin of the billowy deep;
Her daughter whom we dread to name
She wept, while hailing that majestic dame,
Cymbals of Bacchus from the craggy steep
Sent forth their clear and piercing sound,
Her car the harnessed dragons drew;
Following the nymph torn from her virgin crew.
Amidst her maidens swift of foot were found
Diana skilled the bow to wield,
Minerva, who in glittering state
Brandished the spear and raised her Gorgon shield;
But Jove looked down from Heaven t'award another fate.

I. 2.

Soon as the mother's toils were o'er,
When she had finished her career,
And sought the ravished maid no more,
To caves where drifted snows appear,
By Ida's nymphs frequented, did she pass,
And threw herself in sorrow lost,
On rocks and herbage crusted o'er with frost,
Despoiled the wasted champaign of its grass,
Rendered the peasant's tillage vain,
Consuming a dispeopled land
With meagre famine; Spring at her command
Denied the flocks that sickened on the plain
The leafy tendrils of the vine;
Whole cities died, no victims bled,
No frankincense perfumed Heaven's vacant shrine;
Nor burst the current from the Spring's obstructed head.

II. 1.

Then ceased the banquet, wont to charm
Both gods above and men below:
The mother's anger to disarm,
And mitigate the stings of woe,
Till in these words Jove uttered his behests:
"Let each benignant grace attend
Sweet music's sympathizing aid to lend,
And drive corrosive grief from Ceres' breast

Indignant for her ravished child:
Now, O ye Muses, with the lyre
Join the shrill hymns of your assembled choir,
The brazen trumpet fill with accents wild,
And beat the rattling drums amain."
Then first of the immortal band,
Venus with lovely smile approved the strain,
And raised the deep-toned flute in her enchanting hand.

II. 2.

The laws reproved such foul desire,
Yet 'gainst religion didst thou wed;
Thy uncle caught love's baleful fire,
And rushed to thy incestuous bed.
Thee shall the mighty mother's wrath confound,
Because, through thee, before her shrine
No victims slain appease the powers divine.
Great virtue have hinds' hides, and ivy wound
Upon a consecrated rod;
And youths, with virgins in a ring,
When high from earth with matchless force they spring,
Loose streams their hair, they celebrate that god
The Bacchanalian votaries own,
And waste in dance the sleepless night.
But thou, confiding in thy charms alone,
Forgett'st the moon that shines with more transcendent light.

HELEN, CHORUS.

Helen. Within the palace, O my friends, we prosper
For Proteus' royal daughter, in our schemes
Conspiring when her brother questioned her
About my lord, no information gave
Of his arrival: to my interests true
She said, that cold in death he views no longer
The radiant sun. But now my lord hath seized
A vengeful falchion, in that mail designed
To have been plunged beneath the deep arrayed
With nervous arm he lifts an orbed shield,
In his right hand protended gleams the spear,
As if with me he was prepared to pay
To the deceased due homage. Furnished thus

With brazen arms, he's ready for the battle,
And numberless barbarians will subdue
Unaided, soon as we the ship ascend.
Exchanging those unseemly weeds which clothe
The shipwrecked mariner, in splendid robes
Have I arrayed him, from transparent springs
The laver filled, and bathed his wearied limbs.
But I must now be silent, for the man
Who fancies I am ready to become
His consort, leaves the palace. O my friends,
In your attachment too I place my trust,
Restrain your tongues, for we, when saved ourselves,
If possible will save you from this thraldom.

THEOCLYMENUS, HELEN, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

Theocly. Go forth, in such procession as the stranger
Directs you, O my servants, and convey
These gifts funereal to the briny deep.
But if thou disapprove not what I say,
Do thou, O Helen, yield to my persuasions,
And here remain. For whether thou attend,
Or art not present at the obsequies
Of thy departed husband, thou to him
Wilt show an equal reverence. Much I dread
Lest hurried on by wild desire thou plunge
Into the foaming billows, for the sake
Of him on whom thou doat'st, thy former lord,
Since thou his doom immoderately bewail'st
Though he be lost, and never can return.

Helen. O my illustrious husband, I am bound
To pay due honours to the man whom first
I wedded, of our ancient nuptial joys
A memory still retaining, for so well
I loved my lord that I could even die
With him. But what advantage would result
To the deceased, should I lay down my life?
Yet let me go myself, and to his shade
Perform each solemn rite. But may the gods,
On you, and on the stranger who assists me
In this my pious task, with liberal hand
Confer the gifts I wish. But you in me
Shall such a consort to your palace bear

As you deserve, to recompense your kindness
To me and Menelaus. Such events
In some degree are measured by the will
Of Fortune: but give orders for a ship
To be prepared, these trappings to convey,
So shall your purposed bounty be complete.

Theocly. [*to one of his Attendants.*]
Go thou, and furnish them a Tyrian bark
Of fifty oars, with skilful sailors manned.

Helen. But may not he who decorates the tomb
Govern the ship?

Theocly. My sailors must to him
Yield an implicit deference.

Helen. This injunction
Repeat, that they may clearly understand it.

Theocly. A second time, will I, and yet a third,
Issue this self-same mandate, if to thee
This can give pleasure.

Helen. May the gods confer
Blessings on you, and prosper my designs!

Theocly. Waste not thy bloom with unavailing tears.

Helen. To you this day my gratitude will prove.

Theocly. All these attentions to the dead are nought
But unavailing toil.

Helen. My pious care
Not to those only whom the silent grave
Contains, but to the living too extends.

Theocly. In me thou mayst expect to find a husband
Who yields not to the Spartan Menelaus.

Helen. I censure not your conduct, but bewail
My own harsh destiny.

Theocly. Bestow thy love
On me, and prosperous fortunes shall return.

Helen. It is a lesson I have practised long,
To love my friends.

Theocly. Shall I my navy launch,
To join in these funereal rites?

Helen. Dread lord,
Pay not unseemly homage to your vassals.

Theocly. Well! I each sacred usage will allow
Practised by Pelops' race, for my abodes
Are undefiled with blood: thy Menelaus

In Ægypt died not. But let some one haste
And bid the nobles bear into my house
The bridal gifts: for the whole earth is bound
To celebrate in one consenting hymn
My blest espousals with the lovely Helen,
But go, embark upon the briny main,
O stranger, and as soon as ye have paid
All decent homage to her former lord
Bring back my consort hither: that with me
When you have feasted at our nuptial rite
You to your native mansion may return,
Or here continue in a happy state.

[*Exit* THEOCLYMENUS.

Mene. O Jove, thou mighty father, who art called
A god supreme in wisdom, from thy heaven
Look down, and save us from our woes: delay not
To aid us: for we drag the galling yoke
Of sorrow and mischance: if with thy finger
Thou do but touch us, we shall soon attain
The fortune which we wish for, since the toils
We have endured already are sufficient.
Ye gods, I now invoke you, from my mouth
So shall ye hear full many joyful accents
Mixed with these bitter plaints: for I deserve not
To be for ever wretched; but to tread
At length secure. O grant me this one favour,
And make my future life completely blest.

[*Exeunt* MENELAUS *and* HELEN.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Swift bark of Sidon, by whose dashing oars
Divided oft, the frothy billows rise,
Propitious be thy voyage from these shores:
In thy train the dolphins play,
O'er the deep thou lead'st the way,
While motionless its placid surface lies.
Soon as Serenity the fair,
That azure daughter of the main,
Shall in this animating strain

Have spoken: "To the gentle breeze of air
Expand each undulating sail,
Row briskly on before the gale,
Ye mariners, in Perseus' ancient seat
Till Helen rest her wearied feet."

I. 2.

Those sacred nymphs shall welcome thy return
Who guard the portals of Minerva's fane
Or speed the current from its murmuring urn:
Choral dances of delight
That prolong the jocund night,
At Hyacinthus' banquet shalt thou join,
Fair stripling, whom with luckless hand
Unwitting did Apollo slay
At games that crowned the festive day,
Hurling his quoit on the Laconian strand;
To him Jove's son due honours paid:
At Sparta too, that lovely maid
Shalt thou behold, whom there thou left'st behind,
Still to celibacy consigned.

II. 1.

O might we cleave the air, like Libyan cranes,
Who fly in ranks th' impending wintry storm;
When their shrill leader bids them quit the plains,
They the veteran's voice obey,
O'er rich harvests wing their way,
Or where parched wastes th' unfruitful scene deform.
With lengthened neck, ye feathered race
Who skim the clouds in social band,
Where the seven Pleiades expand
Their radiance, and Orion heaves his mace,
This joyous embassy convey
As near Eurotas' banks ye stray;
That Menelaus to his subject land
Victorious comes from Phrygia's strand.

II. 2.

Borne in your chariot down th' ethereal height,
At length, ye sons of Tyndarus, appear,
While vibrates o'er your heads the starry light:

Habitants of heaven above,
Now exert fraternal love,
If ever Helen to your souls was dear,
A calm o'er th' azure ocean spread,
Bridle the tempests of the main,
Propitious gales from Jove obtain,
Your sister snatch from the barbarian's bed:
Commenced on Ida's hill, that strife,
Embittered with reproach her life,
Although she never viewed proud Ilion's tower
Reared by Apollo's matchless power.

THEOCLYMENUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mess. O king, I have discovered in the palace,
Events most inauspicious: what fresh woes
Is it my doleful office to relate!
Theocly. Say what hath happened?
Mess. Seek another wife,
For Helen hath departed from this realm.
Theocly. Borne through the air on wings, or with swift foot
Treading the ground?
Mess. Her o'er the briny main
From Ægypt's shores, hath Menelaus wafted,
Who came in person with a feigned account
Of his own death.
Theocly. O dreadful tale! what ship
From these domains conveys her? thou relat'st
Tidings the most incredible.
Mess. The same
You to that stranger gave, and in one word
To tell you all, he carries off your sailors.
Theocly. How is that possible? I wish to know:
For such an apprehension never entered
My soul, as that one man could have subdued
The numerous band of mariners, with whom
Thou wert sent forth.
Mess. When from the royal mansion
Jove's daughter to the shore was borne, she trod
With delicate and artful step, pretending
To wail her husband's loss, though he was present,
And yet alive. But when we reached the haven,
Sidonia's largest vessel we hauled forth,

Furnished with benches, and with fifty oars;
But a fresh series of incessant toil
Followed this toil; for while one fixed the mast,
Another ranged the oars, and with his hand
The signal gave, the sails were bound together,
Then was the rudder fastened to the stern
With thongs, cast forth: while they observed us busied
In such laborious task, the Grecian comrades
Of Menelaus to the shore advanced,
Clad in their shipwrecked vestments. Though their form
Was graceful, yet their visages were squalid:
But Atreus' son, beholding their approach,
Under the semblance of a grief that masked
His treacherous purpose, in these words addressed them:
"How, O ye wretched sailors, from what bark
Of Greece that hath been wrecked upon this coast
Are ye come hither? will ye join with us
In the funereal rites of Menelaus,
Whom Tyndarus's daughter, to an empty tomb
Consigns, though absent?" Simulated tears
They shed, and went aboard the ship, conveying
The presents to be cast into the sea
For Menelaus. But to us these things
Appeared suspicious, and we made remarks
Among ourselves upon the numerous band
Of our intruding passengers; but checked
Our tongues from speaking openly, through deference
To your commands. For when you to that stranger
Trusted the guidance of the ship, you caused
This dire confusion. All beside, with ease
Had we now lodged aboard, but could not force
The sturdy bull t' advance; he bellowing rolled
His eyes around, bending his back and low'ring
Betwixt his horns, nor dared we to approach
And handle him. But Helen's husband cried
"O ye who laid Troy waste, will ye forget
To act like Greeks? why scruple ye to seize
And on your youthful shoulders heave the beast
Up to the rising prow, a welcome victim

To the deceased?" His falchion, as he spoke,
The warrior drew. His summons they obeyed,
Seized the stout bull, and carried him aboard:
But Menelaus stroked the horse's neck
And face, and with this gentle usage led him
Into the bark. At length when all its freight
The vessel had received, with graceful foot
Helen, the steps ascending, took her seat
On the mid deck; and Menelaus near her,
E'en he who they pretended was no more.
But some on the right side, and on the left
Others in equal numbers, man to man
Opposed, their station took, their swords concealing
Beneath their garments. We distinctly heard
The clamorous sailors animate each other
To undertake the voyage. But from land
When a convenient distance we had steered,
The pilot asked this question: "Shall we sail,
O stranger, any farther from the coast,
Or is this right? for 'tis my task to guide
The vessel." He replied: "Enough for me."
Then seized with his right hand the falchion, leaped
Upon the prow, and standing o'er the bull
The victim (without mentioning the name
Of any chief deceased; but as he drove
The weapon through his neck) thus prayed: "O Neptune,
Who in the ocean dwell'st, and ye chaste daughters
Of Nereus, to the Nauplian shore convey
Me and my consort, from this hostile land,
In safety." But a crimson tide of blood,
Auspicious to the stranger, stained the waves;
And some exclaimed "There's treachery in this voyage,
Let us sail homewards, issue thy commands,
And turn the rudder." But the son of Atreus,
Who had just slain the bull, to his companions
Called loudly: "Why delay, O ye the flower
Of Greece, to smite, to slaughter those barbarians,
And cast them from the ship into the waves?"
But to your sailors our commander spoke
A different language: "Will not some of you

Tear up a plank, or with a shattered bench,
Or ponderous oar, upon the bleeding heads
Of those audacious foreigners our foes,
Impress the ghastly wound?" But on their feet
All now stood up; our hands with nautic poles
Were armed, and theirs with swords: a tide of slaughter
Ran down the ship. But Helen from the poop
The Greeks encouraged: "Where is the renown
Ye gained at Troy? display 'gainst these barbarians
The same undaunted prowess." In their haste
Full many fell, some rose again, the rest
Might you have seen stretched motionless in death.
But Menelaus, sheathed in glittering mail,
Wherever his confederates he descried
Hard pressed, rushed thither with his lifted sword,
Driving us headlong from the lofty deck
Into the waves, and forced your mariners
To quit their oars. But the victorious king
Now seized the rudder, and to Greece declared
He would convey the ship: they hoisted up
The stately mast: propitious breezes came;
They left the land: but I from death escaping,
Let myself gently down into the waves
Borne on the cordage which sustains the anchor;
My strength began to fail, when some kind hand
Threw forth a rope, and brought me safe ashore,
That I to you these tidings might convey.
There's nought more beneficial to mankind
Than wise distrust.

Chorus. I never could have thought
That Menelaus who was here, O king,
Could have imposed so grossly or on you
Or upon us.

Theoclymenus. Wretch that I am, ensnared
By woman's treacherous arts! the lovely bride
I hoped for, hath escaped me. If the ship
Could be o'ertaken by our swift pursuit,
My wrongs would urge me with vindictive hand
To seize the strangers. But I now will punish
That sister who betrayed me; in my house
Who when she saw the Spartan Menelaus,

Informed me not: she never shall deceive
Another man by her prophetic voice.
Chorus. Ho! whither, O my sovereign, would you go,
And for what bloody purpose?
Theocly. Where the voice
Of rigid justice summons me. Retire,
And stand aloof.
Chorus. Yet will not I let loose
Your garment; for you hasten to commit
A deed most mischievous.
Theocly. Wouldst thou, a slave,
Govern thy lord?
Chorus. Here reason's on my side.
Theocly. That shall not I allow, if thou refuse
To quit thy hold.
Chorus. I will not then release you.
Theocly. To slay that worst of sisters.
Chorus. That most pious.
Theocly. Her who betrayed me.
Chorus. Glorious was the fraud
That caused so just a deed.
Theocly. When she bestowed
My consort on another.
Chorus. On the man
Who had a better claim——
Theocly. But who is lord
Of what belongs to me?
Chorus. Who from her sire
Received her.
Theocly. She by Fortune was bestowed
On me.
Chorus. But ta'en away again by Fate.
Theocly. Thou hast no right to judge of my affairs.
Chorus. If I but speak to give you better counsels.
Theocly. I am thy subject then, and not thy king.
Chorus. For having acted piously, your sister
I vindicate.
Theocly. Thou seem'st to wish for death.
Chorus. Kill me. Your sister you with my consent
Shall never slay; I rather would yield up
My life on her behalf. It is most glorious
To generous servants for their lords to die.

CASTOR *and* POLLUX, THEOCLYMENUS, CHORUS.

Cas. & P. Restrain that ire that hurries thee away
Beyond the bounds of reason, O thou king
Of Ægypt's realm; and listen to the voice
Of us twin sons of Jove, whom Leda bore
Together with that Helen who is fled
From thy abodes. Thou rashly hast indulged
Thine anger, for the loss of her whom Fate
Ne'er destined to thy bed. Nor hath thy sister
Theonoe, from th' immortal Nereid sprung,
To thee done any injury; she reveres
The gods, and her great father's just behests.
For till the present hour, was it ordained
That Helen in thy palace should reside:
But when Troy's walls were from their bases torn,
And she had to the rival goddesses
Furnished her name, no longer was it fit
That she should for thy nuptials be detained,
But to her ancient home return, and dwell
With her first husband. In thy sister's breast
Forbear to plunge the sword, and be convinced
That she in this affair hath acted wisely.
We long ere this our sister had preserved,
Since Jove hath made us gods, but were too weak
At once to combat the behests of Fate,
And the immortal powers, who had ordained
That these events should happen. This to thee,
O Theoclymenus, I speak. These words
Next to my lovely sister, I address;
Sail with your husband, for a prosperous breeze
Your voyage shall attend. We your protectors
And your twin brothers, on our coursers borne
Over the waves, will guide you to your country,
But after you have finished life's career,
You shall be called a goddess, shall partake
With us the rich oblations, and receive
The gifts of men: for thus hath Jove decreed.
But where the son of Maia placed you first,
When he had borne you from the Spartan realm,
And formed by stealth from the aërial mansions
An image of your person, to prevent
Paris from wedding you, there is an isle

Near the Athenian realm, which men shall call
Helen in future times, because that spot
Received you, when in secrecy conveyed
From Sparta. The Heavens also have ordained
The wanderer Menelaus shall reside
Among the happy islands. For the gods
To those of nobler minds no hatred bear;
At their command though grievous toil await
The countless multitude.

Theocly. Ye sons of Jove
And Leda, I the contest will decline
Which I at first so violently urged,
Hoping your lovely sister to obtain,
And my own sister's life resolve to spare:
Let Helen to her native shores return,
If 'tis the will of Heaven: but be assured,
The same high blood ye spring from with the best
And chastest sister: hail then, for the sake
Of Helen with a lofty soul endued,
Such as in female bosoms seldom dwells.

Chorus. A thousand shapes our varying fates assume
The gods perform what least we could expect,
And oft the things for which we fondly hoped
Come not to pass; but Heaven still finds a clue
To guide our steps through life's perplexing maze,
And thus doth this important business end.

ELECTRA

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

Auturgus.	Tutor.
Electra.	Messenger.
Orestes.	Castor and Pollux.
Pylades.	Chorus of Mycenæan Virgins.

Auturgus.

Thou ancient glory of this land, famed stream
Of Inaches, thou sawst the mighty host,
When in a thousand ships to Phrygia's strand
The royal Agamemnon bore the war.
The Dardan monarch slain, the towers of Troy
And the proud city levelled with the ground,
To Argos he returned, and many spoils
From the barbarians rent triumphant fixed
In the high temples. There his toils were crowned
With conquest; but by Clytemnestra's wiles,
His wife, and by Ægisthus' murdering hands,
Son of Thyestes, in his house he died;
Leaving the ancient sceptre, from the hand
Of Tantalus to him derived, he fell.
And now Ægisthus lords it o'er the land,
His royal throne possessing, and his wife,
Daughter of Tyndarus. He, when for Troy
He sailed, his son Orestes in his house
And young Electra's budding beauties left.
Orestes, by Ægisthus marked for death,
The guardian of his father's youth by stealth
To Strophius bore, that in the Phocian land
He might protect him. In her father's house
Remained Electra: her, when youth's warm bloom
Glowed on her cheek, the high-born chiefs of Greece
In marriage sought: through fear lest she should bear
To any Argive sons that might revenge
The death of Agamemnon, in the house

Ægisthus held her, and repulsed the suit
Of ev'ry wooer. But his gloomy fears
Still prompting that by stealth she might bear sons
To one of noble lineage, he resolved
To kill her; but her mother, though her soul
Was fierce and ruthless, saved her from his hands:
She for her husband's murder had some plea
To urge, but dreaded from her children's blood
Public abhorrence. Then Ægisthus framed
These villainous designs: he offered gold,
The son of Agamemnon, from this land
Escaped, whoe'er would kill; to me espoused
He gives Electra; from Mycenæ sprung
My parents, thus far no reproach is mine,
My race illustrious, but not blest with wealth,
And poverty obscures my noble birth.
To one thus sunk he gave her, that his fears
Might likewise sink; for should she wed a man
Whose high rank gives him lustre, he might rouse
The murder of her father, sleeping now,
And vengeance then might on Ægisthus fall.
Yet, Venus be my witness, by my touch
She hath not been dishonoured; she is still
A virgin. In my humble state I scorn
Such insult to the daughters of the great.
I grieve too for Orestes, hapless youth,
To me in words allied, should he return
To Argos, and behold his sister placed
In marriage so unworthy of her birth.
This some may deem a folly, to receive
A virgin in my house, and touch her not;
But let such know that by distorted rules
They measure continence, themselves depraved.

ELECTRA, AUTURGUS.

Electra. O dark-browed Night, nurse of the golden stars,
In thee this vase sustaining on my head
I to the flowing river bend my steps
(Not by necessity to this compelled,
But to the gods to show the insolent wrongs
I suffer from Ægisthus), and my griefs
For my lost father to the wide extent

Of ether breathe: for from the royal house
Me my destructive mother hath driven forth,
To gratify her husband: having borne
T' Ægisthus other children, she hath made
Me and Orestes outcasts from the house.

Autur. Why wilt thou thus, unhappy lady, toil,
For my sake bearing labours, nor desist
At my desire? Not thus hast thou been trained.

Electra. Thee equal to the gods I deem my friend;
For in my ills thou hast not treated me
With insult. In misfortunes thus to find,
What I have found in thee, a gentle power
Lenient of grief, must be a mighty source
Of consolation. It behoves me then,
Far as my power avails, to ease thy toils,
That lighter thou mayst feel them, and to share
Thy labour, though unbidden: in the fields
Thou hast enough of work; be it my task
Within to order well. The lab'rer, tired
Abroad, with pleasure to his house returns,
Accustomed all things grateful there to find.

Autur. Go then, since such thy will: nor distant far
The fountain from the house. At the first dawn
My bullocks yoked I to the field will drive,
And sow my furrows: for no idle wretch,
With the gods always in his mouth, can gain
Without due labour the support of life.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

Orestes. O Pylades, thee first of all mankind
Faithful and friendly I esteem; alone
Hast thou received Orestes, held me high
In thy dear love, thus with misfortunes pressed
And suff'ring, as I suffer, dreadful ills,
Wrought by Ægisthus, whose accursed hand,
And my destructive mother joined her aid,
Murdered my father. But the Argive soil,
Commanded by the god's oracular voice,
No mortal conscious to my steps, I tread,
His murder on his murd'rers to avenge.
This night my father's tomb have I approached,
Poured the warm tear, presented my shorn locks.

And offered on the pyre the victim's blood,
Secret from those who lord it o'er this land.
The walls I enter not, a double charge
At once emprising; to the Argive bounds
I come, that by the tyrant's spies if known
I to another's realms may soon retire;
And seek my sister; for they say that here
In marriage joined she dwells, a virgin now
No more: with her I would hold converse, her
Take my associate in this deed, and learn
All that hath passed within the walls. But now,
For now the grey morn opes her radiant eye,
Retire we from this public path: perchance
Some ploughman, or some female slave, from whom
We may gain knowledge, may in sight appear.
And see, a female slave, her tresses shorn,
Bears from the spring her vase; sit we awhile,
And question her, if haply from her words
We may learn aught for which we hither came.

ELECTRA.

Strophe.

Begin, begin, for this the hour,
The mournful measures weeping pour.
Is there a wretch like me on earth?
The royal Agamemnon gave me birth,
My mother Clytemnestra—shame
Fall on that odious name!
And me each tongue within Mycenæ's walls
Th' unhappy, lost Electra calls.
My soul to grief a prey,
My hated life in anguish wastes away:
My tears for thee, my father, flow,
For in the shades below,
By cursed Ægisthus and his barb'rous wife—
Ah me, ah me, my miseries!—
Basely deprived of life,
The royal Agamemnon lies.
Yet once more raise the tearful strain,
The sweetly-mournful measures soothe my pain.

Antistrophe.

Begin, begin, for this the hour,
The mournful members weeping pour.
Unhappy brother, in what state,
What house is cruel servitude thy fate,
Thy sister, in those rooms confined
Once by her sire assigned
The chaste retirement of her happier years,
Thy wretched sister left to tears,
Tears which incessant flow
From the deep anguish of severest woe?
O mayst thou come (O Jove, O Jove,
Hear from thy throne above!)
To soothe the pangs my tortured heart that rend:
T' avenge thy father basely slain,
Mayst thou to Argos bend
Thy weary, wand'ring foot again.
Take from my head this vase, that high
May swell the mournful nightly melody.

Epode.

The dismal song, the song of death,
To thee, my father, will I raise,
To thee among the shades beneath:
So pass my mournful days.
For thee my bleeding breast I tear,
And beat my head, and rend my hair,
Shorn as an off'ring to the dead:
Yes, poor Electra beat thy head.
As some broad-rolling stream along,
For his lost father torn away,
Caught in the wily net a prey,
The tuneful cygnet pours the song;
So thee, my father, I lament,
In thy last bath deprived of breath,
Stretched on the bed of death:
So I deplore the curst intent
Formed 'gainst thy sad return from Troy,
The keen axe furious to destroy.
For thee no crown thy wife designed,
No festive wreath thy brows to bind,

But the relentless trenchant sword:
And, by her raging passions led,
Aids the base murd'rer's deed abhorred,
Then takes him to her bed.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Daughter of Agamemnon, I with speed,
Electra, to thy rustic cottage fly:
For one, whose herds on these rude mountains feed,
A swain, on whose good faith we firm rely,
Came, from Mycenæ came;
The Argives, thus he says, proclaim
Three days of festal rites divine,
And all the virgins haste to Juno's shrine.

ELECTRA.

Strophe 2.

No more, my friends, the gorgeous vest,
Which in her happier hours Electra graced,
No more the gem in gold enchased,
With vivid radiance sparkling on my breast,
Delight my mind: my feet no more
The mazy-winding dance shall tread,
No more the train of Argive virgins lead.
In tears, ah me! I melt away;
In tears, sad solace of each wretched day,
My ceaseless mis'ries I deplore.
My sordid toils these locks defile,
Around me see these vestments vile:
Of Agamemnon's daughter this the fate?
Where now my father's royal state?
Where the proud glories of his name,
And Troy recording sad her conqueror's mighty fame?

CHORUS.

Antistrophe 1.

Great is the goddess: go then, with us go;
Receive whate'er thy beauties may improve,
The gold, the vests with various dyes that glow.

Thinkst thou with tears th' unhonoured gods to move?
Not won by sighs their aid,
But by pure vows with rev'rence paid,
The gods, to crush thy foes, will send,
And blessings on thy future days t' attend.

ELECTRA.

Antistrophe 2.

My cries, my vows, no god will hear,
Nor heeded they my father's spouting gore.
Ah me! the murdered I deplore,
And for the living exile pour the tear:
He, distant from his native land,
Wanders, poor outcast, o'er the earth,
And seeks mean refuge at some servile hearth,
Dragging from realm to realm his woes,
Though in his veins the blood of monarchs flows.
I, by oppression's iron hand
Driven from my father's royal seat,
Dwell in this low obscure retreat,
Here waste in toils my wretched life away,
Or o'er the rugged mountains stray:
Whilst, glorying in her impious deeds,
My mother to her bed the blood-stain'd murd'rer leads.

Chorus. The sister of thy mother, Helena,
Hath been the cause of many ills to Greece,
And to thy house.

Electra. Ah me! ye female train,
My measures I break off: some strangers, lodged
Nigh to the cottage, from their ambush rise.
Fly by the path, I to the house will fly;
Let us be swift t' escape their ruffian hands.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Orestes. Stay, thou unhappy; fear not aught from me.
Electra. Thee, Phœbus, that I die not, I implore.
Orestes. Others more hated would I rather kill.
Electra. Away, nor touch one whom thou oughtst not touch.
Orestes. There is not whom more justly I may touch.
Electra. Why with thy sword in ambush near my house?
Orestes. Stay, hear; not vain thy stay thou soon shalt own.
Electra. I stay; the stronger thou, I in thy power.

Orestes. Bearing thy brother's words to thee I come.
Electra. Most welcome. Breathes he yet this vital air?
Orestes. He lives: I first would speak what brings thee joy.
Electra. O, be thou blest for these most grateful words!
Orestes. To both in common this I give to share.
Electra. Where is th' unhappy outcast wand'ring now?
Orestes. He wastes his life not subject to one state.
Electra. Finds he with toil what life each day requires?
Orestes. Not so; but mean the wand'ring exile's state.
Electra. But with what message art thou from him charged?
Orestes. T' inquire, if living, where thou bearst thy griefs.
Electra. First, then, observe my thin and wasted state.
Orestes. Wasted with grief, so that I pity thee.
Electra. Behold my head, its crispéd honours shorn.
Orestes. Mourning thy brother or thy father dead?
Electra. What can be dearer to my soul than these?
Orestes. Alas! What deemst thou are thy brother's thoughts?
Electra. He, though far distant, is most dear to me.
Orestes. Why here thy dwelling from the city far?
Electra. O stranger, in base nuptials I am joined.
Orestes. I feel thy brother's grief. To one of rank?
Electra. Not as my father once to place me hoped.
Orestes. That hearing I may tell thy brother; speak.
Electra. This is his house: in this I dwell remote.
Orestes. This house some digger or some herdsman suits.
Electra. Generous, though poor, in reverence me he holds.
Orestes. To thee what reverence doth thy husband pay?
Electra. He never hath presumed t' approach my bed.
Orestes. Through sacred chastity, or from disdain?
Electra. Scorning my noble parents to disgrace.
Orestes. How in such nuptials feels he not a pride?
Electra. Him, who affied me, not my lord he deems.
Orestes. Thinking Orestes might revenge the wrong?
Electra. This too he fears; yet modest is his mind.
Orestes. A generous man, and one who merits much.
Electra. If to his house the absent e'er returns.
Orestes. But this debasement could thy mother brook?
Electra. Their husbands, not their children, wives regard.
Orestes. Why did Ægisthus offer this base wrong?
Electra. Thus placing me, he wished my children weak.
Orestes. That from thee no avengers might arise.
Electra. For this design may vengeance on him fall.

Orestes. That yet thou art a virgin doth he know?
Electra. He knows it not. This undisclosed we hold.
Orestes. Are these, who hear us, faithful, and thy friends?
Electra. Never thy words or mine will they disclose.
Orestes. What should Orestes do, if he return?
Electra. Canst thou ask this? How base. The time now calls——
Orestes. But how thy father's murd'rers should he slay?
Electra. Daring to do what they, who slew him, dared.
Orestes. Couldst thou, with him, thy mother bear to kill!
Electra. With the same axe, by which my father fell.
Orestes. This may I tell him, and thy soul resolved?
Electra. My mother's blood first shedding, might I die!
Orestes. O, were Orestes nigh, to hear these words!
Electra. If seen, I should not know him, stranger, now.
Orestes. No wonder, for when parted both were young.
Electra. Nor by my friends, save one, would he be known.
Orestes. Who bore him, as they say, by stealth from death?
Electra. The aged guardian of my father's youth.
Orestes. Was thy dead father honoured with a tomb?
Electra. As he was honoured, from the house cast forth.
Orestes. Alas the barbarous deed! A sense of ills,
Which strangers suffer, wounds the human heart.
But speak, that to thy brother I may bear,
By thee informed, words which perchance may wound
His ear, but which concerns him much to know.
Those, who have knowledge, feel the tender touch
Of pity, not th' unknowing; yet to know
Too much is oft the bitter source of grief.
Chorus. My soul is with the same desire inflamed.
For, from the city distant, nought I know
Of the ills there; I wish to be informed.
Electra. I would speak, if I might; and to a friend
May I not speak my suffring father's wrongs,
And mine? But, stranger, since to this discourse
Thou dost enforce me, I conjure thee tell
Orestes his calamities, and mine.
Tell him in what mean garb thou seest me clad,
How sordid, and beneath what lowly roof,
Born as I was to royalty, I lodge.
I, labouring at the loom the lengthened robe,
Shall want the vest to clothe my nakedness:

And, bearing water from the flowing fount,
No more partaker of the feast, no more
Myself a virgin, 'midst the virgin train
Leading the dance, to them I bid adieu;
To Castor also bid adieu, to whom,
Ere to the gods advanced, I was betrothed,
As from the same illustrious lineage sprung.
Meantime my mother 'midst the Phrygian spoils
Sits on her throne, the Asiatic dames,
Made by my father's conquest slaves, attend
Her state, their rich Idæan vests confined
With clasps of gold, my father's clodded gore
Yet putrid in the house; and the same car,
In which my father rode, his murderer mounts
The sceptre, ensign of his kingly sway
O'er Greece in arms confederate, he with pride
Grasps in his bloody hands. The monarch's tomb
Unhonoured nor libations hath received,
Nor myrtle bough; no hallowed ornament
Hath dignified the pyre. Inflamed with wine
My mother's husband, the illustrious lord,
For so they call him, tramples on the earth
Insultingly where Agamemnon lies;
And hurling 'gainst his monument a stone,
Thus taunts us with proud scorn: "Where is thy son,
Orestes where? Right noble is thy tomb
Protected by his presence." Thus he mocks
The absent: but, O stranger, tell him this,
Suppliant I beg thee. Many give the charge,
And I interpret it; my hands, my tongue,
My mind desponding with its grief, my head
Shorn of its tresses, and his father. Shame,
Base shame it were if, when his father's arm
Subdued the Trojans, he should want the power
Alone to hurl his vengeance on one man,
Now in youth's prime, and from a nobler sire.

Chorus. But see, the man, thy husband, to his toils
Giving a respite, hastens to his house.

AUTURGUS, ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

Autur. Ha! who these strangers, whom before my doors
I see? Why come they to these rustic gates?

Of me aught want they? With young men to stand
Abroad, a woman's honour ill beseems.
Electra. Thou faithful friend, let no suspicion touch
Thy mind: their converse truly shalt thou know.
These by Orestes charged, are come to me.
Strangers, forgive what he hath said amiss.
Autur. What say they? Lives he? Is he yet a man?
Electra. He lives, they say, and speak what wins my faith.
Autur. Remembers he his father, and thy wrongs?
Electra. This lives in hope: an exile's state is weak.
Autur. What from Orestes come they to relate?
Electra. He sent them secret to observe my ills.
Autur. Some they behold, and some thou mayst relate.
Electra. They know them, of each circumstance informed.
Autur. Then long ago my lowly doors to them
Should have been opened. Enter ye the house;
And for your welcome tidings you shall share
Such hospitable viands as the stores
Of my poor mansion yield. You, who attend,
What for their journey needful they have brought
Bear in: nor you refuse; for you are come
Friends to a friendly man; poor though I am,
A sordid spirit never will I show.
Orestes. Now by the gods, is this the man who holds
Thy marriage in such holy reverence,
Scorning to do Orestes shameful wrong?
Electra. The poor Electra's husband this is called.
Orestes. Nature hath giv'n no outward mark to note
The generous mind: the qualities of men
To sense are indistinct. I oft have seen
One of no worth a noble father shame,
And from vile parents worthy children spring,
Meanness oft grov'lling in the rich man's mind,
And oft exalted spirits in the poor.
How then discerning shall we judge aright?
By riches? Ill would they abide the test;
By poverty? On poverty awaits
This ill, through want it prompts to sordid deeds;
Shall we pronounce by arms? But who can judge,
By looking on the spear, the dauntless heart?
Such judgment is fallacious; for this man,
Nor great among the Argives, nor elate

With the proud honours of his house, his rank
Plebeian, hath approved his liberal heart.
Will you not then learn wisdom, you whose minds
Error with false presentments leads astray?
Will you not learn by manners and by deeds
To judge the noble? Such discharge their trust
With honour to the state, and to their house:
Mere flesh, without a spirit, is no more
Than statues in the forum: nor in war
Doth the strong arm the dang'rous shock abide
More than the weak: on nature this depends,
And an intrepid mind. But we accept
Thy hospitable kindness: for the son
Of Agamemnon, for whose sake we come,
Present or not, is worthy: to this house
Go, my attendants; I must enter it:
This man, though poor, more cheerful than the rich
Receives me; to his kindness thanks are due.
More would it joy me if thy brother, blest
Himself, could lead me to his prosperous house;
Yet haply he may come; th' oracular voice
Of Phœbus firmly will be ratified:
Lightly of human prophecies I deem.

[ORESTES *and his attendants enter the house.*

Chorus. Ne'er till this hour, Electra, were our hearts
So warmed with joy: for fortune now perchance,
Though slow in her advance, may firmly stand.

Electra. Why, thou unhappy, of thy humble house
Knowing the penury, wouldst thou receive
Such guests, of rank superior to thine own?

Autur. Why not? If they are noble, so their port
Denotes them, will they not alike enjoy
Contentment, be their viands mean or rich?

Electra. Since thou hast done what suits not thy low state,
To my loved father's aged guardian go;
He near the river Tanus, which divides
The realms of Argos from the Spartan land,
An outcast from the city, leads his herds;
Entreat him to attend thee to thy house,
Supplying what may entertain thy guests.
He will rejoice, presenting to the gods
His vows, when he shall hear the son, preserved

By him, yet lives; for from my father's house
We from my mother nothing should receive;
And bitter were the tidings, should she learn,
What most would grieve her, that Orestes lives.

Autur. These words, since such thy pleasure, I will bear
To the old man. But enter thou the house
With speed, and all things set in order there;
For many things a woman, be her thoughts
Intent, may find to form the grateful feast;
And in the house such plenty yet remains,
As for one day may well supply their wants.
Yet on such subjects when my thoughts are turned,
I deem of wealth as having mighty power
To give the stranger welcome, and to aid
The body when afflicted with disease;
But of small moment to the daily food
Which nature craves; for to supply her wants
An equal measure serves the rich and poor.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Ye gallant ships, that o'er the main
Rushed with innumerous oars,
Dancing amidst the Nereid train
To Troy's detested shores,
Your dark-beaked prows, whilst wanton round
The pipe enamoured dolphins bound,
The son of Thetis pleased to guide
Achilles, leaping on the strand
(With Agamemnon's martial band),
Where Simois rolls his tide.

Antistrophe 1.

The Nereids left th' Eubœan shore,
And arms divinely bright
For Vulcan's golden anvils bore:
O'er Pelion's rocky height,
O'er sacred Ossa's wood-crowned brow,
Which shows the nymphs the plains below,
They passed, the warlike father where
Th' heroic son of Thetis bred,
The pride of Greece, by glory led
Th' Atridæ's toils to share.

Strophe 2.

One, who the spoils of Troy had shared,
I saw in Nauplia's port, and raptured hung,
O son of Thetis, on his tongue,
Whilst he the glories of thy shield declared;
On its bright orb what figures rise,
Terrific to the Phrygian's eyes:
Grasping the Gorgon's head, the verge around,
With waving wings his sandals bound,
A sculptured Perseus rises o'er the main:
Protector of the pastured plain,
Hermes, the messenger of Jove,
Seems with the favoured chief his golden wings to move.

Antistrophe 2.

Full in the midst the orb of day
In all its radiance blazes through the sky;
The fiery coursers seem to fly,
And silent rolling o'er the ethereal way
The stars refulgent through the night,
To Hector's eyes a dreadful sight;
High on the helmet Sphinxes glow in gold,
Who, whilst their prey their talons hold,
In triumph seem their barb'rous song to pour
The richly burnished hauberk o'er;
Breathing fierce flames, with horrid speed
The dire Chimæra springs to seize Pirene's steed.

Epode.

Dreadful the blood-stained spear; the car
Four coursers whirl amidst the war,
Behind them clouds of dust black-rising roll.
Such martial chiefs the monarch led;
Yet by a hand accursed he bled,
By his wife's hand: her noble blood
From the rich streams of Tyndarus flowed,
But deeds of horror darken on her soul.
Yet may the gods' avenging power
On thee their righteous fury shower;
Yet may thy neck the falchion wound,
Yet may I see thy blood distain the ground!

Old Tutor, Electra, Chorus.

Tutor. Where is my honoured mistress, my loved child,
Daughter of Agamemnon, once my charge?
Steep to her house and difficult th' ascent;
With pain my age-enfeebled feet advance,
Yet lab'ring onwards with bent knees I move
To seek my friends. O daughter, for mine eyes
Before the house behold thee, I am come,
Bringing this tender youngling from my fold,
These garlands, from the vases these fresh curds,
And this small flask of old and treasured wine
Of grateful odour; scanty the supply,
Yet, with aught weaker if allayed, the cup
Will yield a grateful bev'rage. Let one bear
Into the house these presents for thy guests.
I with these tattered vests meanwhile will wipe
Mine eyes, for they are wet with gushing tears.

Electra. Why, good old man, thus wet thy tearful eyes?
After this length of time dost thou recall
The memory of my ills? or mourn the flight
Of poor Orestes, or my father's fate,
Whom, in thy hands sustaining, once thy care
Nurtured, to thee and to thy friends in vain?

Tutor. In vain: but this my soul could not support;
For to his tomb, as on the way I came,
I turned aside, and falling on the ground,
Alone and unobserved, indulged my tears;
Then of the wine, brought for thy stranger guests,
Made a libation, and around the tomb
Placed myrtle branches; on the pyre I saw
A sable ewe, yet fresh the victim's blood,
And clust'ring auburn locks shorn from some head:
I marvelled, O my child, what man had dared
Approach the tomb, for this no Argive dares:
Perchance with secret step thy brother came,
And paid these honours to his father's tomb.
But view these locks, compare them with thine own,
Whether like thine their colour: nature loves
In those who from one father draw their blood
In many points a likeness to preserve.

Electra. Unworthy of a wise man are thy words,
If thou canst think that to Mycenæ's realms

My brother e'er with secret step will come,
Fearing Ægisthus: then between our locks
What can th' agreement be? To manly toils
He in the rough palæstra hath been trained,
Mine by the comb are softened; so that hence
Nothing may be inferred: besides, old man,
Tresses like-coloured often mayst thou find
Where not one drop of kindred blood is shared.

Tutor. Trace but his footsteps, mark th' impression, see
If of the same dimensions with thy feet.

Electra. How can th' impression of his foot be left
On hard and rocky ground? But were it so,
Brother and sister never can have foot
Of like dimensions: larger is the man's.

Tutor. But hath thy brother, should he come, no vest
Which thou wouldst know, the texture of thy hands,
In which, when snatched from death, he was arrayed?

Electra. Knowst thou not, when my brother from this land
Was saved, I was but young? But were his vests
Wrought by my hands, then, infant as he was,
How could he now, in his maturer age,
Be in the same arrayed, unless his vests
Grew with his person's growth? No; at the tomb
Some stranger, touched with pity, sheared his locks,
Or native, by the tyrant's spies unmarked.

Tutor. Where are these strangers? I would see them: much
Touching thy brother wish I to inquire.

Electra. See, from the house with hast'ning step they come.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, TUTOR, CHORUS.

Tutor. Their port is noble: but th' exterior form
Oft cheats the eye; many of noble port
Are base: yet will I bid the strangers hail.

Orestes. Hail, hoary sire! Electra, of what friend
Doth chance present us the revered remains?

Electra. The guardian, strangers, of my father's youth

Orestes. Is this the man who bore thy brother hence?

Electra. The man who saved him this, if yet he lives.

Orestes. Why doth he scan me with that curious eye,
As if inspecting some bright impress marked
On silver? Some resemblance doth he trace?

Electra. In thee he pleased may mark my brother's years.

Orestes. A much-loved man. Why wheels he round me thus?
Electra. I too am struck with wonder, seeing this.
Tutor. My dear, my honoured child, address the gods
Electra. For what? Some absent, or some present good?
Tutor. To hold the treasure, which the god presents.
Electra. See, I address the gods: what wouldst thou say?
Tutor. Look now on him, my child, that dearest youth.
Electra. I feared before thy senses were not sound.
Tutor. My sense not sound, when I Orestes see!
Electra. Why speakest thou what all my hopes exceeds?
Tutor. In him beholding Agamemnon's son.
Electra. What mark hast thou observed, to win my faith?
Tutor. That scar above his eyebrow, from a fall
Imprinted deep, as in his father's house
He long ago, with thee, pursued a hind.
Electra. I see the mark remaining from his fall.
Tutor. Why the most dear delayst thou yet t' embrace
Electra. No longer now will I delay: the marks
By thee discovered are persuasive proofs.
O thou at length returned, beyond my hopes
Thus I embrace thee.
Orestes. And my arms at last
Thus fondly clasp thee.
Electra. This I never thought;
Orestes. Nor could I hope it.
Electra. Art thou he indeed?
Orestes. Alone to thee in firm alliance joined,
If well this net, my present task, I draw.
Electra. I am assured; or never must we more
Believe that there are gods, if impious wrongs
Triumphant over justice bear the sway.
Chorus. Yes, thou art come, O ling'ring day,
At length art come, and beaming bright
Showst to Mycenæ's state his glorious light,
Who, from his father's palace chased,
A wretched wand'rer long disgraced,
Cheers us with his returning ray.
Some god, some god, my royal friend,
Back our own radiant victory leads.
Raise then thy hands, and to the skies
Let for thy brother suppliant vows arise,

That, as with daring foot he treads,
Success, success may on his steps attend.

Orestes. So may it be. With joy thy dear embrace
I now receive: at length the time will come
When it shall be repeated. But, old man,
For opportune thy coming, tell me now
What I shall do on the base murd'rer's head,
And on my mother's, who impurely shares
His nuptial bed, t' avenge my father's death.
Have I no friend at Argos? not one left
Benevolent? Are, with my fortunes, all
Entirely lost? To whom shall I apply?
Doth the night suit my purpose, or the day?
Or which way shall I turn against my foes?

Tutor. Amidst thy ruined fortunes, O my son,
Thou hast no friend. Where shall the man be found
Prompt in a prosp'rous or an adverse state
Alike to share? But learn this truth from me,
For of thy friends thou wholly art bereft,
Nor doth e'en hope remain; in thine own hand
Now, and in fortune, thou hast all wherewith
To gain thy father's house and regal state.

Orestes. What shall we do t' effect this glorious end?

Tutor. Ægisthus and thy mother thou must kill.

Orestes. For that I come: but how obtain that crown?

Tutor. Thou canst not enter, if thou wouldst, the walls.

Orestes. With guards defended, and with spear-armed hands?

Tutor. Ay; for he fears thee, nor untroubled sleeps.

Orestes. Well; let thine age some counsel then impart.

Tutor. Hear me; this now hath to my thought occurred.

Orestes. Mayst thou point out and I perceive some good!

Tutor. I saw Ægisthus, hither as I came.

Orestes. I am attentive to thee: in what place?

Tutor. Near to those meadows where his coursers feed.

Orestes. What doing? Hope arises from despair.

Tutor. A feast, it seems, preparing to the Nymphs.

Orestes. Grateful for children born, or vows for more?

Tutor. I know but this, the victims were prepared.

Orestes. With him what men? Or with his slaves alone

Tutor. No Argive there, but his domestic train.

Orestes. Is there who would discover me, if seen?

Tutor. No: these are slaves who never saw thy face.

Orestes. To me, if I prevail, they might be friends.
Tutor. Such the slave's nature: but this favours thee.
Orestes. How to his person near shall I approach?
Tutor. Beneath his eye pass when the victims bleed.
Orestes. That way, it seems, some pastured fields are his.
Tutor. That he may call thee to partake the feast.
Orestes. A bitter guest, if so it please the gods.
Tutor. Then, as th' occasion points, thy measures form.
Orestes. Well hast thou said. But where my mother now?
Tutor. At Argos; but the feast she soon will grace.
Orestes. Why not together with her husband come?
Tutor. Dreading the people's just reproach, she stayed.
Orestes. She knows then the suspicions of the state?
Tutor. She does: the impious woman all abhor.
Orestes. How then together shall I slay them both?
Electra. I will form measures for my mother's death.
Orestes. Fortune shall guide them to a good event.
Electra. May she in this be aiding to us both!
Orestes. It shall be so: but what dost thou devise?
Electra. To Clytemnestra go, old man, and say
To a male child Electra hath giv'n birth.
Tutor. That she long since, or lately bore this child?
Electra. Tell her the days require the lustral rites.
Orestes. And how thy mother's death doth this effect?
Electra. Hearing my child-bed illness, she will come.
Tutor. She hath no tenderness for thee, my child.
Electra. Nay, my parturient honours she will weep.
Tutor. Perchance she may: but brief thy purpose speak.
Electra. Death, certain death awaits her, if she comes.
Tutor. Within these gates then let her set her feet.
Electra. Soon to the gates of Pluto shall she turn.
Tutor. Might I see this, with pleasure I would die.
Electra. First then, old man, conduct him to the place.
Tutor. The hallowed victims where Ægisthus slays?
Electra. Then meet my mother, and relate my words.
Tutor. That she shall think them uttered by thy lips.
Electra. Now is thy task: by thee he first must bleed.
Orestes. Had I a guide, this instant would I go.
Tutor. Thy steps with ready zeal I will direct.
Orestes. God of my country, god of vengeance, Jove!
O, pity us! Our sufferings pity claim.
Electra. Pity us, for our race from thee we draw.

Orestes. And thou, whose altars at Mycenæ blaze,
Imperial Juno, give us victory,
If in a righteous cause we ask thy aid!
Electra. O, give us to avenge our father's death!
Orestes. And thou, my father, who beneath the earth
Hast thy dark dwelling, through unholy deeds—
And thou, O Earth, to whom I stretch my hands,
Great queen—protect thy children, O protect
Thy most dear children: come, and with thee bring,
To aid our cause, each mighty dead, that shook
The spear with thee, and with thee conquered Troy!
Hearst thou, so foully by my mother wronged,
And all, the impious murderers who abhor?
Electra. All this, I know, my father hears; but now
The time demands thee. Go! By thy bold hand,
I charge thee, let the vile Ægisthus die:
For in the fatal contest shouldst thou fall,
My life too ends; nor say thou that I live,
For I will plunge the sword into my throat
This go I to prepare. If glad report
Of thy success arrive, then all the house
Shall echo to my joy: but shouldst thou die
All otherwise. Thou hearst what I resolve.
Orestes. I know it all.
Electra. In this behoves thee much
To be a man. Ye women, let your voice
Give signal, like a flaming beacon, how
The contest ends: I will keep watch within,
Holding the keen sword ready in my hands;
For never shall my body from my foes,
If I must fall, indecent outrage bear.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

The Argive mountains round,
'Mongst tales of ancient days
From age to age recorded, this remains:
Tuned to mellifluous lays
Pan taught his pipe to sound,
And as he breathed the sprightly swelling strains,
The beauteous ram with fleece of gold,

God of shepherds on he drove.
The herald from the rock above
Proclaims, "Your monarch's wonders to behold,
Wonders to sight, from which no terrors flow,
Go, Mycenæans, to th' assembly go."
With rev'rence they obey the call,
And fill th' Atridæ's spacious hall.

Antistrophe 1.

Its gates with gold o'erlaid
Wide oped each Argive shrine,
And from the altars hallowed flames arise;
Amidst the rites divine,
Joying the Muse to aid,
Breathed the brisk pipe its sweet notes to the skies;
Accordant to the tuneful strain
Swelled the loud-acclaiming voice,
Now with Thyestes to rejoice:
He, all on fire the glorious prize to gain,
With secret love the wife of Atreus won,
And thus the shining wonder made his own;
Then to th' assembly vaunting cried,
"Mine is the rich Ram's golden pride."

Strophe 2.

Then, oh then, indignant Jove
Bade the bright sun backward move,
And the golden orb of day,
And the morning's orient ray:
Glaring o'er the western sky
Hurled his ruddy lightnings fly:
Clouds, no more to fall in rain,
Northward roll their deep'ning train:
Libyan Ammon's thirsty seat,
Withered with the scorching heat,
Feels nor showers nor heavenly dews
Grateful moisture round diffuse.

Antistrophe 2.

Fame hath said (but light I hold
What the voice of fame hath told)
That the sun, retiring far,

Backward rolled his golden car,
And his vital heat withdrew,
Sick'ning man's bold crimes to view.
Mortals, when such tales they hear,
Tremble with a holy fear,
And th' offended gods adore:
She, this noble pair who bore,
Dared to murder, deed abhorred!
This forgot, her royal lord.

Chorus. Ah me, ah me! Heard you a noise, my friends?
Or doth imagination startle me
With vain alarms? Not indistinct the sounds,
Like Jove's low-mutt'ring thunder, roll along.
Come from the house, revered Electra, come.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Electra. What hath befall'n, my friends, what danger comes?
Chorus. This only know I, death is in that noise.
Electra. I heard it, distant, yet it reached my ear.
Chorus. The sound comes rolling from afar, yet plain.
Electra. Comes from an Argive, or my friends, the groan?
Chorus. I know not: for confused the voices rise.
Electra. This must to me be death; why then delay?
Chorus. Forbear: that clear thou mayst thy fortunes know.
Electra. No: we are vanquished: none with tidings comes.
Chorus. They will: not light t' effect a monarch's death.

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Mess. To you, ye virgins of Mycenæ, joy
I bring; to all his friends my message speaks:
Orestes is victorious, on the ground
Ægisthus, Agamemnon's murd'rer, lies.
Behoves you then address th' immortal gods.
Electra. And who art thou? How wilt thou prove thy truth?
Mess. Thy brother's servant knowst thou not in me?
Electra. O thou most welcome, through my fears I scarce
Distinguished thee: I recognize thee now.
What, is my father's hated murd'rer dead?
Mess. Twice, what thou wishest, I his death announce.
Chorus. All-seeing justice, thou at length art come.

Electra. What was the manner of his death? How fell
This vile son of Thyestes? I would know.
Mess. Departing from this house, the level road
We entered soon, marked by the chariot-wheel
On either side. Mycenæ's noble king
Was there, amidst his gardens with fresh streams
Irriguous walking, and the tender boughs
Of myrtles, for a wreath to bind his head,
He cropt. He saw us; he addressed us thus
Aloud: "Hail, strangers! Who are ye, and whence,
Come from what country?" Then Orestes said,
"Thessalians, victims to Olympian Jove
We, at the stream of Alpheus, go to slay."
The king replied, "Be now my guests, and share
The feast with me; a bullock to the Nymphs
I sacrifice; at morn's first dawn arise,
Then you shall go: but enter now my house."
Thus as he spoke, he took us by the hand,
And led us nothing loth: beneath his roof,
Soon as we came, he bade his slaves prepare
Baths for the strangers, that the altars nigh,
Beside the lustral ewers, they might stand:
Orestes then, "With lavers from the pure
And living stream we lately have been cleansed:
But with thy citizens these rites to share,
If strangers are permitted, we, O king,
Are ready, to thy hospitable feast
Nothing averse." The converse here had end.
Their spears, with which they guard the king, aside
Th' attendants laid; and to their office all
Applied their hands: some led the victim, some
The basket bore, some raised the flames, and placed
The cauldrons on the hearth: the house resounds.
Thy mother's husband on the altars cast
The salted cakes, and thus addressed his vows:
"Ye Nymphs that haunt the rocks, these hallowed rites
Oft let me pay, and of my royal spouse
Now absent, both by fortune blest as now,
And let our foes, as now, in ruin lie—"
Thee and Orestes naming. But my lord
Far other vows addressed, but gave his words
No utt'rance, to regain his father's house.

Ægisthus then the sacrificing sword
Took from the basket, from the bullock's front
To cut the hair, which on the hallowed fire
With his right hand he threw, and, as his slaves
The victim held, beneath its shoulder plunged
The blade; then turning to thy brother spoke:
"Amongst her noble arts Thessalia boasts
To rein the fiery courser, and with skill
The victim's limbs to sever. Stranger, take
The sharp-edged steel, and show that fame reports
Of the Thessalians truth." The Doric blade
Of tempered metal in his hand he grasped,
And from his shoulders threw his graceful robe;
Then, to assist him in the toilsome task,
Chose Pylades, and bade the slaves retire.
The victim's foot he held, and its white flesh,
His hand extending, bared, and stript the hide
Ere round the course the chariot twice could roll,
And laid the entrails open. In his hands
The fate-presaging parts Ægisthus took
Inspecting: in the entrails was no lobe;
The valves and cells the gall containing show
Dreadful events to him that viewed them near;
Gloomy his visage darkened. But my lord
Asked whence his saddened aspect. He replied,
"Stranger, some treachery from abroad I fear;
Of mortal men Orestes most I hate,
The son of Agamemnon. To my house
He is a foe." "Wilt thou," replied my lord,
"King of this state, an exile's treachery dread?
But that, these omens leaving, we may feast,
Give me a Phthian for this Doric blade,
The breast asunder I will cleave." He took
The steel, and cut. Ægisthus, yet intent,
Parted the entrails; and as low he bowed
His head, thy brother, rising to the stroke,
Drove through his back the pond'rous axe, and rived
The spinal joints. His heaving body writhed
And quivered struggling in the pangs of death.
The slaves beheld, and instant snatched their spears,
Many 'gainst two contesting; but my lord
And Pylades with dauntless courage stood

Opposed, and shook their spears. Orestes then
Thus spoke: "I come not to this state a foe,
Nor to my servants; but my father's death
I on his murd'rer have avenged. You see
Th' unfortunate Orestes; kill me not,
My father's old attendants." At those words
They all restrained their spears; and he was known
By one grown hoary in the royal house.
Crowns on thy brother's head they instant placed,
With shouts of joy. He comes, and with him brings
Proof of his daring, not a Gorgon's head,
But, whom thou hatest, Ægisthus; blood for blood,
Bitter requital, on the dead is fall'n.

Chorus. Now for the dance, my friend, thy foot prepare,
Now with joy-enraptured tread,
Light as the hind that seems to bound in air,
The sprightly measures lead.
Thy brother comes, and on his brows
A crown hath conquest placed:
A wreath so glorious ne'er the victor graced
Where famed Alpheüs flows.
Come then, and with my choral train
To Conquest raise the joyful strain.

Electra. O light, and thou resplendent orb of day,
O earth, and night which I beheld before,
Now I view freely, freely now I breathe,
Now that Ægisthus, by whose murd'ring hand
My father fell, is dead. Whate'er my house
To grace the head contains, I will bring forth,
My friends, and crown my brother's conq'ring brows.

Chorus. Whate'er of ornament thy house contains
Bring, to grace thy brother's head.
My choir the dance, accorded to sweet strains
Dear to the Muse, shall lead.
For now our kings, whose honoured hand
The sceptre justly swayed,
Low in the dust th' oppressive tyrant laid,
Again shall rule the land.
Rise then, my voice, with cheerful cries,
Attempered to thy triumph rise.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

Electra. O glorious victor, from a father sprung
Victorious in th' embattled fields of Troy,
Orestes, for thy brows receive this crown.
From the vain contest of the length'ned course
Thou comest not, but victorious o'er thy foe,
Ægisthus slain, by whom thy father bled,
And I have been undone. Thou too, brave youth,
Trained by a man most pious, in his toils
Faithful associate, Pylades, receive
From me this wreath; for thine an equal share
Of danger. Ever let me hold you blessed.

Orestes. First, of this glorious fortune deem the gods,
Electra, sov'reign rulers; then to me,
The minister of fortune and the gods,
Give the due praise. I come not to relate
That I have slain Ægisthus: deeds shall speak
For me; a proof to all, his lifeless corse
I bring thee: treat it as thy soul inclines:
Cast it by rav'nous beasts to be devoured,
Or to the birds, the children of the air,
Fix it, impaled, a prey: the tyrant now,
Ægisthus, is thy slave, once called thy lord.

Electra. Shame checks my tongue: yet something would I speak.

Orestes. What wouldst thou? Speak: thy fears are vanished now.

Electra. I fear t' insult the dead, lest censures rise.

Orestes. Not one of all mankind would censure thee.

Electra. Hard to be pleased our city, prompt to blame.

Orestes. Speak what thou wouldst, my sister; for to him
Inexpiable enmity we bear.

Electra. Let me then speak; but where shall I begin.
Thy insults to recount? With what conclude?
Or how pursue the train of my discourse?
I never with the opening morn forbore
To breathe my silent plaints, which to thy face
I wished to utter, from my former fears
If e'er I should be free: I now am free.
Now, to thee living what I wished to speak,
I will recount. Thou hast destroyed my hopes,
Made me an orphan, him and me bereft

Of a dear father, by no wrongs enforced.
My mother basely wedding, thou hast slain
The glorious leader of the Grecian arms,
Yet never didst thou tread the fields of Troy.
Nay, such thy folly, thou couldst hope to find
My mother, shouldst thou wed her, nought of ill
To thee intending: hence my father's bed
By thee was foully wronged. But let him know
Who with forbidden love another's wife
Corrupts, then by necessity constrained
Receives her as his own, should he expect
To find that chastity preserved to him,
Which to her former bed was not preserved,
He must be wretched from his frustrate hope.
And what a life of misery didst thou lead,
Though not by thee deemed ill? Thy conscious mind
Of thy unholy nuptials felt the guilt:
My mother knew that she an impious man
In thee had wedded; and, polluted both,
Thou hadst her fortune, she thy wickedness.
'Mongst all the Argives, this had fame divulged,
The man obeys the wife, and not the wife
Her husband: shameful this, when in the house
The woman sovereign rules, and not the man.
And when of children speaks the public voice
As from the mother, not the father sprung,
To me it is unpleasing. He who weds
A wife of higher rank and nobler blood,
Sinks into nothing, in her splendour lost.
This truth unknown, thy pride was most deceived,
Thyself as great thou vauntedst, in the power
Of riches vainly elevate; but these
Are nothing, their enjoyment frail and brief;
Nature is firm, not riches; she remains
For ever, and triumphant lifts her head.
But unjust wealth, which sojourns with the base,
Glitters for some short space, then flies away.
To women thy demeanour I shall pass
Unmentioned, for to speak it ill beseems
A virgin's tongue; yet I shall make it known
By indistinct suggestion. Arrogance
Swelled thy vain mind, for that the royal house

Was thine, and beauty graced thy perfect form.
But be not mine a husband whose fair face
In softness with a virgin's vies, but one
Of manly manners; for the sons of such
By martial toils are trained to glorious deeds:
The beauteous only to the dance give grace.
Perish, thou wretch, to nothing noble formed;
Such wast thou found, and vengeance on thy head
At length hath burst; so perish all, that dare
Atrocious deeds! Nor deem, though fair his course
At first, that he hath vanquished Justice ere
He shall have reached the goal, the end of life.

Chorus. His deeds were dreadful; dreadful hath he felt
Your vengeance. With great power is Justice armed

Orestes. So let it be. But bear this body hence,
My slaves; to darkness let it be consigned;
That when my mother comes, before she feels
The deadly stroke, she may not see the corse.

Electra. Forbear; to other subjects turn we now.

Orestes. What, from Mycenæ see I aid advance?

Electra. This is no friendly aid; my mother comes.

Orestes. As we could wish, amidst the toils she runs.

Electra. High on her car in splendid state she comes.

Orestes. What shall we do? Our mother shall we kill?

Electra. On seeing her hath pity seized thy heart?

Orestes. She bore me, bred me; her how shall I slay?

Electra. As she thy noble father slew and mine.

Orestes. O Phœbus, wild and rash the charge thou gavst.

Electra. Who then are sage, if Phœbus be unwise?

Orestes. The charge to kill my mother: impious deed!

Electra. What guilt were thine t' avenge thy father's death?

Orestes. Now pure, my mother's murderer I should fly.

Electra. Will vengeance for thy father be a crime?

Orestes. But I shall suffer for my mother's blood.

Electra. To whom thy father's vengeance then assign?

Orestes. Like to the gods perchance some demon spoke.

Electra. What, from the sacred tripod! Vain surmise.

Orestes. Ne'er can my reason deem this answer just.

Electra. Sink not, unmanned, to weak and timorous thoughts.

Orestes. For her then shall I spread the fatal net?

Electra. In which her husband caught by thee was slain.

Orestes. The house I enter. Dreadful the intent:

Dreadful shall be my deeds. If such your will,
Ye heavenly powers, so let it be; to me
A bitter, yet a pleasing task assigned.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Chorus. Imperial mistress of the Argive realms,
Drawing from Tyndarus thy noble birth
And sister to th' illustrious sons of Jove,
Who 'midst the flaming ether dwell in stars,
By mortals lab'ring in the ocean waves
In honour as their great preservers held,
Hail! Equal with the gods I thee revere,
Thy riches such, and such thy happy state;
Thy fortune, queen, our veneration claims.
Clytem. First from the car, ye Trojan dames, alight;
Then take my hand, that I too may descend.
The temples of the gods with Phrygian spoils
Are richly graced: these, from the land of Troy
Selected, for the daughter which I lost,
A small, but honourable prize, are mine.
Electra. And may not I, for from my father's house,
I am an outcast slave, this wretched hut
My mean abode, thy blest hand, mother, hold?
Clytem. My slaves are here: labour not thou for me.
Electra. Why hast thou driven me from the house a slave?
For when the house was taken, I was seized,
As these, an orphan of my father reft.
Clytem. Such were the measures which thy father planned,
Where it beseemed him least, against his friends.
For I will speak (though when a woman forms
An ill opinion, from her tongue will flow
Much bitterness) my wrongs from him received:
These known, if for thy hatred thou hast cause,
'Tis just that thou abhor me; but if not,
Why this abhorrence? Me did Tyndarus
Give to thy father, not that I should die,
Nor my poor children: yet he led away,
Her nuptials with Achilles the pretence,
To Aulis led my daughter, in whose bay
His fleet was stationed; on the altar there
My Iphigenia, like a blooming flower,

Did he mow down. Averting hostile arms
That threatened desolation to the state,
Or for the welfare of his house, to save
His other children, if for many one
A victim he had slain, the deed had found
Forgiveness: but for Helena, because
She was a wanton, and his faithless wife
Her husband could not punish, for this cause
My daughter he destroyed; yet for these wrongs,
Great as they were, I had not been enraged,
Nor had I slain my husband; but he came,
And with him brought the raving prophetess
Admitted to his bed, and thus one house
Contained two wives. Women indeed are frail,
Nor other shall I speak; but, this inferred,
Whene'er the husband from his honour swerves,
From his connubial bed estranged, the wife
Will imitate his manners, and obtain
Some other friend; yet slander 'gainst our sex
Raises her voice aloud; while those who cause
These trespasses, the men, no blame shall reach.
Had Menelaus in secret from his house
Been borne, ought I Orestes to have slain,
To save my sister's husband? His son's death
How had thy father brooked? And should not he,
Who slew my daughter, die? Was I to bear
Patient his wrongs? I slew him; to that path,
Which only I could tread, I turned my foot,
Uniting with his foes; for of his friends
Against him who with me would lift the sword?
If, that thy father not with justice died,
Aught thou wouldst urge against me, freely speak.

Electra. What thou hast said is just; yet shame attends
That justice; for the wife, if aught she knows
Of sober sense, should to her husband yield
In all things unreluctant. If thy mind
Dissents, nor to the measure of my speech
Accedes, yet let my mother her last words
Call to her memory; let me freely speak.

Clytem. I now repeat them, nor retract, my child.

Electra. But, hearing, wilt thou not inflict some ill?

Clytem. I will not; but with kindness will requite.

Electra. Then I will speak, and preface thus my speech.
I wish, my mother, that a better mind
Were thine; for excellence of form hath brought
To thee and Helena deserved praise.
Nature hath formed you sisters, light and vain,
Of Castor much unworthy. She was borne
Away, and by her own consent undone;
Thou hast destroyed the noblest man of Greece:
Thy daughter's death thy pretext, thou hast slain
Thy husband; but so well as I none knows,
Before it was decreed that she should die,
Whilst from Mycenæ his departure yet
Was recent, at the mirror didst thou form
The graceful ringlets of thy golden hair.
The wife, that in her husband's absence seeks
With curious care to set her beauty forth,
Mark as a wanton: she with nicest skill
Would not adorn her person to appear
Abroad, but that she is inclined to ill.
Of all the Grecian dames didst thou alone,
I know, rejoice, when prosperous were the arms
Of Troy; but when defeated, on thine eyes
A cloud hung dark; for never didst thou wish
That Agamemnon should from Troy return.
Yet glorious was th' occasion offered thee
The strength of female virtue to display:
Thou hadst a husband in no excellence
Inferior to Ægisthus: and so vile
Thy sister's conduct, thou hadst power from thence
The highest honour to thyself to draw;
For in the foulness of th' example vice
Instructive holds a mirror to the good.
But if my father, as thou urgest, killed
Thy daughter, how have I to thee done wrong?
My brother how? Or why, when thou hadst slain
Thy husband, didst thou not to us consign
Our father's house, but make it the lewd scene
Of other nuptials purchased by that prize?
Nor is thy husband exiled for thy son;
Nor hath he died for me, though, far beyond
My sister's death, me living hath he slain.
If blood, in righteous retribution, calls

For blood, by me behoves it thou shouldst bleed,
And by thy son Orestes, to avenge
My father: there if this was just, alike
Is it just here. Unwise is he, who weds,
Allured by riches or nobility,
A vicious woman: all that greatness brings
Must yield to that endeared domestic bliss,
Which on the chaste though humble bed attends.

Chorus. Respecting women fortune ever rules
In nuptials: some a source of joy I see
To mortals; some nor joy nor honour know.

Clytem. Always, my daughter, was thy nature formed
Fond of thy father: not unusual this:
Some love the men, and on their mothers some
With greater warmth their sweet affections place.
I will forgive thee: nor indeed, my child,
In deeds done by me do I so rejoice.
But do I see thee, fresh from childbirth, thus
Unbathed, and in these wretched vestments clad?
Ah, my unhappy counsels, that I urged
My husband 'gainst thee to a rage too harsh!

Electra. Too late to breathe the sigh, when thou canst give
No healing medicine. My father dead,
Why not recall thy outcast wand'ring son?

Clytem. I fear: my welfare I regard, not his,
Said to breathe vengeance for his father's death.

Electra. Against us why thy husband so enrage?

Clytem. Such is his nature: and impetuous thine.

Electra. My grief is great: but I will check my rage.

Clytem. And he no longer will be harsh to thee.

Electra. High his aspiring; in my house he dwells.

Clytem. Seest thou what contests thou wouldst raise anew?

Electra. I say no more: I fear him, as I fear——

Clytem. Cease this discourse. My presence why required?

Electra. That I am late a mother thou, I ween,
Hast heard: make thou the sacrifice for me,
I have no skill, on the tenth rising morn
What for my son the rites require; for me,
This my first child, experience hath not taught.

Clytem. This is her task, who aided at the birth.

Electra. Unaided and alone I bore the child.

Clytem. So neighbourless, so friendless stands thy house.
Electra. None with the poor a friendship wish to form.
Clytem. Then I will go, and offer to the gods,
The days accomplished, for thy son. This grace
For thee performed, I hasten to the fields,
Where to the nymphs my husband now presents
The hallowed victim. My attendants, drive
These chariots hence, and lead the steeds to stalls;
When you imagine to the gods these rites
I shall have paid, again be present here:
My husband too behoves it me to grace.
Electra. Let my poor house receive thee; but take heed
Lest thy rich vests the black'ning smoke defiles.
There shalt thou sacrifice, as to the gods,
Behoves thee sacrifice: the basket there
Is for the rites prepared, and the keen blade
Which struck the bull: beside him shalt thou fall
By a like blow: in Pluto's courts his bride
He shall receive, with whom in heaven's fair light
Thy couch was shared: to thee this grace I give
Thou vengeance for my father shalt give me.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Refluent the waves of mischief swell,
The forceful whirlwind veers around.
Then in the bath my monarch fell:
The roofs, the battlements resound;
The polished stones, that form the walls,
His voice re-echo, as the hero falls,
"Why, barb'rous woman, by thy hand,
After ten years of war on Phrygia's plain
Returned victorious to my native land,
Why, barb'rous woman, am I slain?"

Antistrophe.

Now Justice, for the injured bed
Which light Love gloried to betray,
Turns back with vengeance on her head,
Who dared her lord to slay.

Long absent in the fields of fame
Scarce to the high Cyclopean towers he came.
Eager to shed his blood she strove;
With her own hand the keen-edged axe she swayed,
With her own hand the murd'rous weapon drove,
And low her hapless husband laid.

Epode.

Hapless to such a pest allied,
She, like a lioness in savage pride
Midst shaggy forests wild that feeds,
Dared such atrocious deeds.

Clytem. O, by the gods, my children, do not kill [*Within.*
Your mother!
Chorus. Heard you in the house her cry?
Clytem. Ah me, ah me!
Chorus. I too lament thy fate,
Fall'n by thy children's hands. Th' avenging god
Dispenses justice when occasion calls.
Dreadful thy punishment; but dreadful deeds,
Unhappy, 'gainst thy husband did'st thou dare.
Stained with their mother's recent-streaming blood,
See, from the house they come, terrible proof
Of ruthless slaughter. Ah! there is no house,
Nor hath been, with calamities oppressed,
More than the wretched race of Tantalus.

Orestes, Pylades, Electra, Chorus.

Orestes. O Earth, and thou all-seeing Jove, behold
These bloody, these detested deeds! In death
Stretched on the ground beneath my hand they lie,
Both lie, a sad atonement for my wrongs.
Electra. Much to be mourned, my brother, to be mourned
With tears, and I the cause. Unchecked, unawed
I to my mother came, I boldly came
To her that gave me birth. Alas thy fate,
Thy fate, my mother! Thou hast suffered ills,
And from thy children, whose remembrance time
Can ne'er efface, deeds ruthless, and far worse
Than ruthless: yet with justice hast thou paid
This debt to vengeance for my father's blood.

Orestes. O Phœbus, vengeance from thy hallowed shrine
Didst thou command, unutterable deeds,
But not obscure, through thee are done, from Greece
The bloody bed removed. But to what state
Shall I now go, what hospitable house?
Who will receive me? Who, that fears the gods,
Will look on me, stained with my mother's blood?
Electra. And whither, to what country shall I fly,
Wretch that I am? What nuptials shall be mine?
What husband lead me to the bridal bed?
Orestes. Again, again thy sober sense returns,
Changed with the gale: thy thoughts are holy now,
Then ruled by frenzy. To what dreadful deeds,
O thou most dear, hast thou thy brother urged
Reluctant? Didst thou see her, when she drew
Her vests aside, and bared her breasts and bowed
To earth her body, whence I drew my birth,
Whilst in her locks my furious hand I wreathed?
Electra. With anguished mind, I know, thou didst proceed,
When heard thy wailing mother's piteous cries.
Orestes. These words, whilst with her hand she stroked my cheeks,
Burst forth, "Thy pity I implore, my son:"
Soothing she spoke, as on my cheeks she hung,
That bloodless from my hand the sword might fall.
Chorus. Wretched Electra, how couldst thou sustain
A sight like this? How bear thy mother's death,
Seeing her thus before thine eyes expire?
Orestes. Holding my robe before mine eyes I raised
The sword, and plunged it in my mother's breast.
Electra. I urged thee to it: I too touched the sword.
Chorus. Of deeds most dreadful this which thou hast done.
Cover thy mother's body; in her robes
Decent compose her wounded limbs.——Thou gavst
Being to those who were to murder thee.
Electra. Behold my friends, and not my friends, we wrap
Her robes around her, to our house the end
Of mighty ills.
Chorus. But see, above the house
What radiant forms appear? or are they gods
Celestial? Mortals through th' ethereal way
Walk not: but why to human sight disclosed?

CASTOR *and* POLLUX.

Hear, son of Agamemnon: for to thee
Thy mother's brothers, twin-born sons of Jove,
Castor, and this my brother Pollux, speak.
Late having calmed the ocean waves, that swelled
The lab'ring vessel menacing, we came
To Argos, where our sister we beheld,
Thy mother, slain. With justice vengeance falls
On her: in thee unholy is the deed.
Yet Phœbus, Phœbus—— But, my king is he,
I will be silent: yet, though wise, he gave
To thee response not wise: but I must praise
Perforce these things. Thou now must do what Fate
And Jove decree. To Pylades affy
Electra; let him lead her to his house
His bride: but leave thou Argos; for its gates,
Thy mother slain, to thee is not allowed
To enter; for the Furies, hounds of hell,
Will chase thee, wand'ring, and to madness whirled.
Go then to Athens, seat of Pallas, clasp
Her hallowed image: that they touch thee not
She o'er thy head her Gorgon shield will hold.
They from her dreadful dragons will start back
Appalled. The mount of Mars is there, where first
On blood the gods sate judges, when enraged
That by unhallowed nuptials wrong had stained
His daughter, Mars, to ruthless vengeance fired,
Slew Halirrhothius, of ocean's lord
The son. Most righteous from that time is held
The judgment there, and by the gods confirmed:
There thou must make appeal, this bloody deed
Be there decided: from the doom of blood
Absolved the equal numbers of the shells
Shall save thee that thou die not; for the blame
Apollo on himself will charge, whose voice
Ordained thy mother's death: in future times
This law for ever shall be ratified,
The votes in equal number shall absolve.
At this the dreadful goddesses with grief
Deep-wounded through the yawning earth shall sink
E'en at the mount; thence an oracular gulf

Hallowed, revered by mortals. On the banks
Of Alpheus, the Lycæan temple near,
Thou must inhabit an Arcadian state.
And from thy name the city shall be called.
This I have said to thee; but in the earth
The citizens of Athens shall entomb
The body of Ægisthus: the last rites
Due to thy mother Menelaus shall pay,
At Nauplia late from vanquished Troy arrived,
And Helena. From Egypt, from the house
Of Proteus, she returns: to Ilion's towers
She went not; but, that strife and bloody war
'Mongst mortal men might rise, an imaged form
Resembling Helena Jove sent to Troy.
This virgin now let Pylades receive
His bride, and home to the Achaian land
Conduct her. Him, to thee in words allied,
To Phocis let him lead, and give him there,
Just to his modest virtue, ample wealth.
Thou to the narrow Isthmus bend thy steps,
Thence speed thee to the blest Cecropian state.
The fated doom, assigned for blood, fulfilled,
Thou shalt be happy, from thy toils released.

Chorus. O sons of Jove, may we presume t' approach,
And converse with you be allowed to hold?

Castor. You may; no curse this blood derives on you.

Orestes. May I address you, sons of Tyndarus?

Castor. Thou mayst: to Phœbus this dire deed I charge.

Chorus. Gods as you are, and brothers to the slain,
Why from the house did not your power avert
This deadly ill?

Castor. The dire necessity
Of fate impelled it, and the voice unwise
Of Phœbus from his shrine.

Electra. But me what voice
Of Phœbus urged, what oracle, that I
The murderer of my mother should become?

Castor. Common the actions, common too the fates.
One demon, hostile to your parents, rent
The hearts of both.

Orestes. For such a length of time
Not seen, loved sister, am I torn so soon

From thy dear converse, leaving thee so soon,
And left?

Castor. She hath a husband, and a house,
Nor suffers aught severe, save that she leaves
The Argive state.

Orestes. And what severer woe
Can rend the anguished heart, than to be driv'n
An outcast from our country? I must leave
My father's house, and for my mother's blood
The sentence passed by foreign laws abide.

Castor. Resume thy courage: to the sacred seat
Of Pallas shalt thou come; be firm, endure.

Electra. O my loved brother, clasp, O clasp my breast
Close to thy breast. For from our father's house
A mother's curse hath torn us, dreadful curse!

Orestes. Thus let me clasp thee: o'er me, as now dead,
As o'er my tomb thy lamentations pour.

Castor. Ah, thou hast uttered sorrows e'en to gods
Mournful to hear. In me, in heaven's high powers
Is pity for the woes of mortal men.

Orestes. I shall no more behold thee.

Electra. And no more
Shall I come near thy sight.

Orestes. No more with thee
Shall I hold converse: this my last address.

Electra. Farewell, Mycenæ! And you, virgins, born
In the same state with me, farewell, farewell!

Orestes. O thou most faithful, dost thou go e'en now?

Electra. I go; but dew my softened eyes with tears.

Orestes. Go, Pylades, go thou with joy, and wed
Electra.

Castor. Them the nuptial rites await.
Haste thou to Athens, fly these hounds of hell;
For 'gainst thee they their hideous steps advance,
Gloomy and dark, their hands with serpents armed,
Rejoicing in the dreadful pains they give.
To the Sicilian sea with speed we go,
To save the vessels lab'ring in the waves.
But to the impious through th' ethereal tract
We no assistance bring. But, those to whom
Justice and sanctity of life is dear,
We from their dang'rous toils relieve, and save.

Let no one then unjustly will to act,
Nor in one vessel with the perjured sail;
A god to mortals this monition gives.

Chorus. Oh, be you blest! And those, to whom is giv'n
Calmly the course of mortal life to pass
By no affliction sunk, pronounce we blest.

ORESTES

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ELECTRA.
HELENA.
ORESTES.
MENELAUS.
TYNDARUS.
PYLADES.
MESSENGER.
PHRYGIAN SLAVE.
CHORUS OF ARGIVE VIRGINS.

ELECTRA.

THERE is not in the stores of angry heaven
Aught terrible, affliction or distress,
But miserable man bears its full weight.
E'en Tantalus, the son of Jove, the blest
(Not to malign his fate), hangs in the air
And trembles at the rock, which o'er his head
Projects its threat'ning mass; a punishment
They say, for that to heaven's high feast admitted,
A mortal equal with th' immortals graced,
He curbed not the intemperance of his tongue;
The sire of Pelops he, of Atreus this,
For whom the Fates weaving a diadem
Wove discord with the thread, to kindle war
Betwixt the brothers, Atreus and Thyestes.
But why recite things horrible to tell?
Him Atreus feasted, having slain his sons.
From Atreus (may oblivion hide the rest)
Th' illustrious Agamemnon, if illustrious,
And Menelaus had birth; Aërope
Of Crete their mother. Menelaus espoused
The fatal Helen, by the gods abhorred.
Th' imperial Agamemnon wooed the bed
Of Clytemnestra, memorable to Greece;
From her three daughters sprung, Chrysothemis
And Iphigenia, and myself Electra,
One son, Orestes, from this wicked mother,
Who in th' inextricable robe entangled
Her husband murdered, for a cause which ill

Becomes a virgin's modest lips t' unfold.
Th' injustice of Apollo must I blame?
Orestes he commands to slay his mother,
Nor bears to all the glory of the deed.
Not disobedient to the god he slew her.
I had my share, such as a woman might,
And Pylades assisted in the act.
Since then the poor Orestes pines away
Impaired with cruel sickness; on his bed
He lies; his mother's blood to frenzy whirls
His tortured sense: th' avenging powers, that haunt
His soul with terrors thus, I dare not name.
The sixth day this, since on the hallowed pile
My slaughtered mother purged her stains away.
No food hath passed his lips, no bath refreshed
His limbs; but in his garments covered close,
When his severe disease abates a little,
He melts in tears; and sometimes from his couch
Starts furious, like a colt burst from his yoke.
Meantime the state of Argos hath decreed
That shelt'ring roof, and fire, and conference
Be interdicted to us matricides.
And this decisive day the states pronounce
Our doom, to die crushed with o'erwhelming stones,
Or by th' avenging sword plunged in our breasts.
Yet have we one small ray of bright'ning hope,
Hope that we die not; for from Troy returned
After long wand'rings Menelaus arrives,
His vessels in the Nauplian harbour moored,
And to this strand impels his eager oar;
But the woe-working Helen in the shades
Of shelt'ring night, lest some, whose sons were slain
Beneath the walls of Troy, seeing her walk
In day's fair light, with vengeful rage might rise,
And crush the shining mischief, first he lands,
And sends her to our house: there now she is,
Weeping her sister's fate and our afflictions.
Yet 'midst her grief this comfort she enjoys,
Hermione, her virgin daughter, whom
At Sparta, when she sailed for Troy, she left,
The father to my mother's care consigned;
In her delighted she forgets her woes.

But my quick eye glances to each access,
If Menelaus advancing I might see.
Weak help from others, if not saved by him:
The house of the unhappy hath no friend.

ELECTRA, HELENA.

Helena. Daughter of Clytemnestra and the chief
That drew from Atreus his illustrious birth,
Virgin of ripest years, how is it, say,
With thee, unhappy, and the wretch Orestes,
Who in his mother's blood imbrued his hands?
With thee conversing I am not polluted,
Charging the crime on Phœbus. Yet I mourn
My sister's fate; for since I sailed to Troy,
Urged to that madness by th' offended gods,
These eyes have not beheld her; yet, her loss
Deploring, at her fortunes drop the tear.

Electra. Why should I tell thee what thine eyes behold,
The race of Agamemnon in distress?
Myself attendant on th' unhappy dead,
But that he breathes a little he is dead.
Sit sleepless: yet reproach I not his ills.
But thou art happy, happy is thy husband;
To us in our calamities ye come.

Helena. How long on this sick-bed hath he been laid?

Electra. E'er since he shed her blood who gave him breath.

Helena. Ah, wretch! Ah, wretched mother thus to perish!

Electra. Such our lost state I sink beneath our ills.

Helena. Do me one grace I beg thee by the gods.

Electra. As watching at my brother's couch I may.

Helena. Wilt thou go for me to my sister's tomb?

Electra. My mother's dost thou mean? And wherefore go?

Helena. These locks and my libations to present.

Electra. What hinders but thou visit thy friend's tomb?

Helena. And show me to the Grecians? Shame forbids.

Electra. Too late discreet; when shameless from thy house——

Helena. Just is thy censure, but not friendly to me.

Electra. And at Mycenæ dost thou feel this shame?

Helena. I dread the fathers, whose sons died at Troy.

Electra. Against thee loud the voice of Argos cries.

Helena. Oblige me then, and free me from this fear.

Electra. I could not look upon my mother's tomb.
Helena. To send these offerings by a slave were shame.
Electra. Hermione, thy daughter, why not send?
Helena. A virgin 'midst the crowd! Indecent this.
Electra. The favours of the dead, who trained her youth
With fond affection, thus she might repay.
Helena. 'Tis justly urged: I will obey thee, virgin,
And send my daughter; for thy words are wise.
Hermione, come hither: to the tomb
Of Clytemnestra these libations bear,
And these my locks; there pour this honied bowl
Foaming with milk and wine; on the high mound,
Addressing thus the dead, "These hallowed gifts
Helen, thy sister, offers, who through fear
Approaches not thy tomb, dreading the crowd
Of Argos." Bid her be propitious to us,
To me, to thee, my husband, and these two,
These wretched two, whom Phœbus hath undone.
Then promise all that to a sister's shade
A sister should bestow: go, my child, haste,
Present these gifts; then speed thy quick return.
Electra. O nature, in the bad how great an ill! [*Alone.*
But in the virtuous strong thy power to save.
See, she hath shorn th' extremity of her locks,
Anxious of beauty, the same woman still!
May the gods hate thee, as thou hast ruined me,
And him, and universal Greece!—Ah me,
My loved companions come, whose friendly grief
Attunes their sad notes to my mournful strains.
He sleeps now; they will wake him, and my eyes
Will melt in tears, when I behold him rave.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Electra. Dearest of women, softly set your feet,
Not to be heard; gently advance; no noise.
Kind is your friendship: but t' awake him now
From this sweet rest would be a grief to me.
Chorus. Silence, silence! Softly tread:
Nor foot be heard, nor sound, nor noise.
Electra. This way far, far from the bed.

Chorus. I obey.
Electra. Hush, let thy voice
Steal on my ear
Soft as the whispers of the breathing reed.
Chorus. Soft as the whispers of the breathing reed
My voice shall steal upon thy ear.
Electra. Ay, thus, low, low; softly come near;
Come softly, friends, and tell me why
This visit. A long sleep hath closed his eye.
Chorus. Doth hope then brighten on his ill?
Electra. Alas, what hope? Behold him lie;
He breathes, a little breathes, and still
Heaves at short intervals a sigh.
Chorus. Unhappy state!
Electra. Death were it, should you, as thus loud you weep,
Fright from his eyelids the sweet joys of sleep.
Chorus. Yet wail I his unhappy state,
Abhorred deeds of deadly hate,
Rage of vindictive, tort'ring woes,
Which the relentless powers of heaven impose.
Electra. Unjust, unjust the stern command,
The stern command Apollo gave
From Themis' seat, his ruthless hand
In blood, in mother's blood to lave.
Chorus. Ah, turn thine eye.
He stirs, he moves, rolled in the cov'ring vest.
Electra. Wretch, thy rude clamours have disturbed his rest.
Chorus. And yet I think sleep locks his eye.
Electra. Wilt thou be gone? hence wilt thou fly,
That quiet here again may dwell?
Chorus. Again composed he sleeps again.
Electra. 'Tis well,
Chorus. Awful queen, whose gentle power
Brings sweet oblivion of our woes,
And in the calm and silent hour
Distils the blessings of repose,
Come awful Night,
Come from the gloom of Erebus profound,
And spread thy sable-tinctured wings around;
Speed to this royal house thy flight;
For pale-eyed Grief, and wild Affright,

And all the horrors of Despair,
Here pour their rage, and threaten ruin here.
Electra. Softly let your warblings flow;
Further, a further distance keep;
The far-off cadence sweet and low
Charms his repose, and aids his sleep.
Chorus. Tell us, what end
Awaits his mis'ries?
Electra. Death: that end I fear.
He tastes no food.
Chorus. Death then indeed, and near.
Electra. When Phœbus gave the dire command
To bathe in mother's blood his hand,
By whom the father sunk in dust,
He doomed us victims.
Chorus. Dire these deeds, but just.
Electra. She slew, she died.—Thy hand abhorred.
In dust my bleeding father laid:
And for thy blood, in vengeance poured,
We perish, perish as the dead.
The shadowy train
Thou joinest: but my life shall waste away
In tears the night, in sighs and groans the day.
But, ah! to whom shall I complain!
Nor child nor husband soothes my pain:
For ever drag I my distress,
Sigh, mourn, and weep in lonely wretchedness.
Chorus. Go nearer, royal virgin; nearer view him,
That under this soft sleep the sleep of death
Deceive thee not: I like not this still rest.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Orestes. O gentle Sleep, whose lenient power thus soothes
Disease and pain, how sweet thy visit to me,
Who wanted thy soft aid! Blessing divine,
That to the wretched givest wished repose,
Steeping their senses in forgetfulness!—
Where have I been! Where am I? How brought hither?
My late distraction blots remembrance out.
Electra. My most dear brother, oh, what heartfelt joy

To see thee lie composed in gentle sleep!
Wilt thou I touch thee? Shall I raise thee up?
Orestes. Assist me then, assist me; from my mouth
Wipe off this clotted foam; wipe my moist eyes.
Electra. Delightful office, for a sister's hand
To minister relief to a sick brother.
Orestes. Lie by my side, and from my face remove
These squalid locks; they blind my darkened eyes.
Electra. How tangled are the ringlets of thy hair,
Wild and disordered through this long neglect.
Orestes. Pray lay me down again: when this ill frenzy
Leaves me, I am very feeble, very faint.
Electra. There, there: the bed is grateful to the sick,
A mournful, but a necessary tenure.
Orestes. Raise me again; more upright; bend me forward.
Chorus. The sick are wayward through their restlessness.
Electra. Or wilt thou try with slow steps on the ground
To fix thy feet? Variety is sweet.
Orestes. Most willingly: it hath the show of health;
The seeming hath some good, though void of truth.
Electra. Now, my loved brother, hear me, whilst the Furies
Permit thy sense thus clear and undisturbed.
Orestes. Has thou aught new? If good, I thank thee for it;
If ill, I have enough of ill already.
Electra. Thy father's brother, Menelaus, arrives;
His fleet rides anchored in the Nauplian bay.
Orestes. Comes he then? Light on our afflictions dawns:
Much to my father's kindness doth he owe.
Electra. He comes; and, to confirm what now I say,
Brings Helena from Ilium's ruined walls.
Orestes. More to be envied, were he saved alone:
Bringing his wife, he brings a mighty ill.
Electra. The female line of Tyndarus was born
To deep disgrace, and infamous through Greece.
Orestes. Be thou unlike them then; 'tis in thy power;
And further than in words thy virtue prove.
Electra. Alas, my brother, wildly rolls thine eye;
So quickly changed! the frentic fit returns.
Orestes. Ah, mother! Do not set thy Furies on me.
See, how their fiery eyeballs glare in blood,
And wreathing snakes hiss in their horrid hair!
There, there they stand, ready to leap upon me.

Electra. Rest thee, poor brother, rest thee on thy bed;
Thou seest them not; 'tis fancy's coinage all.
Orestes. O Phœbus, they will kill me, these dire forms,
These Gorgon-visaged ministers of hell!
Electra. Thus will I hold thee, round thee throw mine arms,
And check th' unhappy force of thy wild starts.
Orestes. Off, let me go! I know thee, who thou art,
One of the Furies; and thou grapplest with me,
To whirl me into Tartarus. Avaunt!
Electra. What shall I do? Ah me, where shall I seek
Assistance, since th' unfriendly god frowns on us!
Orestes. Bring me the bow of horn which Phœbus gave me,
And with it bade me drive these fiends away,
Should they affright me with their madd'ning terrors.
Electra. Shall any god by mortal hands be wounded?
Orestes. Should she not instant vanish from my sight.
Heard you the clang? Saw you the wingéd shaft
Bound from the distant-wounding bow? Ha, ha!
Here yet! On swift wings mount th' ethereal air,
And there impeach the oracle of Phœbus.—
Whence this disquiet? Why thus pants my breath?
Ah, whither am I wandered from my bed?
For from the storm the high-swoln waves subside.
Why dost thou weep, my sister? Why decline
Thy drooping head, and hide it in thy vest?
I blush to give thee part in my disease,
And wound with grief thy virgin tenderness.
Let not my ills be thus infectious to thee;
Thou barely didst assent; I did the deed,
I shed her blood. But Phœbus I must blame,
Who urged me to this most unholy act;
Then, save with soothing words, assist me not.
Had these eyes seen my father, had I asked him
In duty if I ought to slay my mother,
I think he would have prayed me not to plunge
My murdering sword in her that gave me birth;
Since he could not revisit heaven's sweet light,
And I must suffer all these miseries.
But now unveil thy face and dry thy tears,
My sister, though afflictions press us sore:
And when thou seest me in these fitful moods,
Soothe my disordered sense, and let thy voice

Speak peace to my distraction; when the sigh
Swells in thy bosom, 'tis a brother's part
With tender sympathy to calm thy griefs;
These are the pleasing offices of friends.
But to thy chamber go, afflicted maid,
There seek repose, close thy long-sleepless eyes,
With food refresh thee, and th' enlivening bath.
Shouldst thou forsake me, or with too close tendance
Impair thy delicate and tender health,
Then were I lost indeed; for thou alone,
Abandoned as I am, art all my comfort.

Electra. Should I forsake thee! No; my choice is fixed
And I will die with thee, or with thee live,
Indifferent for myself; for shouldst thou die,
What refuge shall a lonely virgin find,
Her brother lost, her father lost, her friends
All melted from her?—Yet, if such thy wish,
I ought t' obey: recline thee on thy couch,
Nor let these visionary terrors fright thee;
There rest; though all be fancy's coinage wild,
Yet Nature sinks beneath the violent toil.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Awful powers, whose rapid flight
Bears you from the realms of night
To hearts that groan, and eyes that weep,
Where you joyless orgies keep,
Ye gloomy powers, that shake the affrighted air,
And armed with your tremendous rod,
Dealing terror, woe, despair,
Punish murder, punish blood,
For Agamemnon's race this strain,
This supplicating strain, I pour;
No more afflict his soul with pain,
Nor torture him with madness more:
Breathe oblivion o'er his woes,
Leave him, leave him to repose.
Unhappy youth, what toils are thine,
Since Phœbus from his central shrine

Bade thee unsheath th' avenging sword,
And Fate confirmed th' irrevocable word!

Antistrophe.

Here us, king of gods, O hear,
Where is soft-eyed Pity, where?
Whence, to plunge thee thus in woes,
Discord stained with gore arose?
What vengeful Demon thus with footstep dread,
Trampling the blood-polluted ground,
Sternly cruel joys to spread
Horror, rage, and madness round?
Woe, woe is me! In man's frail state
Nor height nor greatness firm abides:
On the calm sea secure of fate,
Her sails all spread, the vessel rides:
Now th' impetuous whirlwinds sweep,
Roars the storm, and swells the deep,
Till with the furious tempest tost
She sinks in surging billows lost.
Yet firm their fate will I embrace,
And still revere this heaven-descended race.

Chorus. But see, the royal Menelaus advances:
That awe-commanding and majestic port
Denotes him of the race of Tantalus.—
Illustrious leader of a thousand ships,
That bore to Asia's strand thy martial host,
All hail! Good fortune guides thee, and the gods,
Fav'ring thy vows, have blessed thy conq'ring arms.

MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

Mene. From Troy returned, with pleasure I behold
This royal house, with pleasure mixed with grief:
For never saw I house encompassed round
With such afflictions. Agamemnon's fate,
How by his wife he perished, I long since
At Malea learned, when rising from the waves
Confessed to open view the sailors' prophet,
Unerring Glaucus, the dire bath disclosed,

The wife, and each sad circumstance of blood;
A tale, that harrowed up my soul with grief,
And wrung the tear from the stern veteran's eye.
But to the Nauplian coast arrived, my wife
First landed, when I hoped with joy to fold
Orestes and his mother in my arms,
As happy now, a wave-washed fisherman
Told me that Clytemnestra is no more,
Slain by th' unholy sword. But, virgins, say
Where is Orestes, who these horrid ills
Hath dared? For when the war called me to Troy,
An infant in his mother's arms I left him,
That now, if seen, his form would be unknown.

Orestes. He whom thou seekst am I: I am Orestes.
To thee, O king, will I unfold my woes,
And willingly: but first I grasp thy knees,
And pour my plain unornamented prayer:
Save me; for thou 'midst my distress art come.

Mene. Ye powers of heaven, what do mine eyes behold?
One from the regions of the dead returned!

Orestes. Well hast thou said: I view the light indeed,
But do not live; such are my miseries.

Mene. How wild, how horrid hangs thy matted hair!

Orestes. The real, not th' apparent, racks my soul.

Mene. Thy shrunk and hollow eye glares dreadfully.

Orestes. My whole frame wastes; nought, save my name, is left.

Mene. Reason revolts at this thy squalid form.

Orestes. Alas, I am the murderer of my mother.

Mene. I have heard it: spare mine ear the tale of woe.

Orestes. I will: yet heaven is rich in woes to me.

Mene. What are thy sufferings? What disease consumes thee?

Orestes. Conscience: the conscious guilt of horrid deeds,

Mene. How sayst thou? Wisdom suffers when obscure.

Orestes. A pining melancholy most consumes me.

Mene. Dreadful its power, but not immedicable.

Orestes. And frenzy, fierce t' avenge my mother's blood.

Mene. When did its rage first seize thee? What the day?

Orestes. The day I raised my hapless mother's tomb.

Mene. What, in the house, or sitting at the pyre?

Orestes. By night, as from rude hands I guard her bones.

Mene. Was any present, to support thy weakness?

Orestes. My Pylades, who aided in her death.
Mene. What phantoms frighten thy disordered sense?
Orestes. Three virgin forms I see gloomy as night.
Mene. Whom thy words mark I know, but will not name.
Orestes. Awful they are: forbear irreverent words.
Mene. And do these haunt thee for thy mother's blood?
Orestes. Ah wretched me, how dreadful their pursuit!
Mene. Thus dreadful sufferings dreadful deeds attend.
Orestes. Yet have we where to charge our miseries.
Mene. Name not thy father's death; that were unwise.
Orestes. Phœbus, by whose command I slew my mother.
Mene. Of right and justice ignorant, I ween.
Orestes. We to the gods submit, whate'er they are.
Mene. And doth not Phœbus in thine ills protect thee?
Orestes. Not yet: delays attend the powers divine.
Mene. How long then since thy mother breathed her last?
Orestes. This the sixth day; the funeral pile yet warm.
Mene. How soon thy mother's blood these powers avenge?
Orestes. Unwisely said: though true, unkind to friends.
Mene. What then avails to have avenged thy father?
Orestes. Nought yet. Delay is as a deed not done.
Mene. In what light does the city view thy deeds?
Orestes. They hate us, so that none hold conference with us.
Mene. Hast thou yet purified thy hands from blood?
Orestes. Where'er I go, each house is barred against me.
Mene. What citizens thus drive thee from the land?
Orestes. Œax, through ranc'rous malice to my father.
Mene. On the avenging Palamedes' death?
Orestes. I wrought it not. But three pursue my ruin.
Mene. The others who? Some of Ægisthus' friends?
Orestes. They hurt me most, whose power now sways the state.
Mene. Commit they not the sceptre to thy hands?
Orestes. They, who no longer suffer us to live!
Mene. How acting? What thou art assured of speak.
Orestes. Sentence against us will this day be given.
Mene. Of exile? or to die? or not to die?
Orestes. To die, with stones crushed by our citizens.
Mene. Why fliest thou not far from this country's bounds?
Orestes. On every side we are enclosed with arms.
Mene. By private foes, or by the Argive state?
Orestes. By the whole state: in brief, that I may die.
Mene. Wretch, thou hast reached misfortune's dire extreme.

Orestes. In thee is all my hope, in thee my refuge:
Happy to us afflicted art thou come;
Share with thy friends that happiness, alone
Enjoy not all the good thou hast received;
In our afflictions bear a friendly part.
Think how my father loved thee, and requite
That love to us: it will become thee well:
They have the name of friends, but not the worth,
Who are not friends in our calamities.
Chorus. But see, the Spartan Tyndarus this way
Directs his aged feet, in sable weeds,
His locks, in grief for his dead daughter, shorn.
Orestes. Ah me! He comes indeed, whose presence most
Fills me with shame for what I have misdone.
I was his darling once; my infant age
With tenderness he nursed, caressed me, bore
The child of Agamemnon in his arms,
And loved me like the twin-born sons of Jove:
Nor Leda less. And is it thus, my soul,
Thus, O my bleeding heart, that I requite
Their ill-paid love! Ah, cover me, ye shades,
Ye clouds, with friendly darkness wrap me round,
And hide me from the terrors of his eye!

TYNDARUS, MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

Tynd. Where shall I see my daughter's husband, where
Find Menelaus? At Clytemnestra's tomb,
Libations as I poured, I heard that he,
With Helen, after all these tedious years,
Is safely in the Nauplian port arrived.
O lead me; for I long to grasp his hand,
To feast mine eyes after this length of years,
And welcome to our shores the man I love.
Mene. Hail, reverend sharer of the bed with Jove!
Tynd. With joy thy greeting I return, my son.
Ah, not to know the future, what an ill!
Hateful to me this murd'rous dragon here
Glares pestilential lightnings from his eyes.
Wilt thou hold conference with th' unhallowed wretch?
Mene. And wherefore not? His father was my friend.
Tynd. From such a father sprung a son so vile?

Mene. He did; to be respected, though unhappy.
Tynd. Barb'rous thy manners, 'mongst barbarians learned.
Mene. Nay, Greece enjoins respect to kindred blood.
Tynd. And not to wish to be above the laws.
Mene. Necessity is to the wise a law.
Tynd. Enjoy it thou; I will have none of it.
Mene. Wisdom approves not anger in thy years.
Tynd. What! Is the contest then of wisdom with him?
If virtuous and dishonourable deeds
Are plain to all, who more unwise than he?
Deaf to the call of justice he infringed
The firm authority of the public laws:
For when beneath my daughter's murd'ring axe
Th' imperial Agamemnon bowed his head,
A horrid deed, which never shall I praise,
He ought t' have called the laws, the righteous laws,
T' avenge the blood, and by appeal to them
Have driven his mother from this royal house:
Thus 'midst his ills calm reason had borne rule,
Justice had held its course, and he been righteous.
But the same Fury, which had seized his mother,
Had now seized him; and with ungoverned rage,
Justly abhorrent of her impious deed,
He did a deed more impious, slew his mother.
For, let me ask thee, should the faithless wife
Bathe in the husband's blood her murd'rous hands,
And should th' avenging son the mother slay,
His son again retaliate blood for blood,
What bound shall the progressive mischief know?
The wisdom of our ancestors ordained
That he, who had the guilt of blood upon him,
Be not allowed the sight, the walks of men,
By banishment atoning, not by death:
Else one must always be to death devote,
Who hath the last pollution on his hands.
But these vile women doth my soul abhor,
And her, my daughter, first, who slew her lord:
Thy Helen too I never will commend,
Never hold converse with her; no, nor thee
Can I approve, who for a worthless woman
In toilsome march hast trod the fields of Troy.
Yet to my power will I support the laws,

And check this savage, blood-polluted rage,
Which spreads wild havoc o'er th' unpeopled land
Hadst thou the feelings of humanity,
Wretch, when thy mother cried to thee for mercy,
And bared her breast to thy relentless view?
I saw it not, that scene of misery,
Yet the soft tear melts from my aged eye.
One thing confirms my words: the gods abhor,
With madness scourge thee, and with terrors haunt,
Vindictive of thy guilt. What need I hear
From other witness what mine eyes behold?
Now, Menelaus, I warn thee, mark me well:
Do not, protecting him, oppose the gods,
But leave him to the vengeance of the state,
Or never set thy foot on Sparta's shore.
My daughter by her death hath rightly paid
The debt to justice: but from him that death
Was most unjust. O, happy had I been,
Had I no daughters: there I am a wretch!

Chorus. Happy his state, who, in his children blest,
Hath not there felt affliction's deepest wound.

Orestes. In reverence to thy age I dread to speak
What I well know must pierce thy heart with grief.
I am unholy in my mother's death,
But holy, as my father I avenged.
The veneration due to those grey hairs
Strikes me with awe: else I could urge my plea
Freely and boldly; but thy years dismay me.
What could I do? Let fact be weighed with fact.
My father was the author of my being;
Thy daughter brought me forth: he gave me life,
Which she but fostered: to the higher cause
A higher reverence then I deemed was due.
Thy daughter, for I dare not call her mother,
Forsook her royal bed for a rank sty
Of secret and adulterous lust: on me
The word reflects disgrace, yet I must speak it.
Ægisthus was this private paramour:
Him first I slew, then sacrificed my mother:
An impious deed; but I avenged my father.
Thou threatenst the just vengeance of the state:
Hear me: deserve I not the thanks of Greece?

Should wives with ruffian boldness kill their husbands,
Then fly for refuge to their sons, and think,
Baring their breast, to captivate their pity,
These deeds would pass for nothing, as the mood,
For something or for nothing, shall incline them.
This complot have I broke, by doing what
Thy pompous language styles atrocious deeds.
My soul abhorred my mother, and I slew her,
Who, when her lord was absent, and in arms
To glorious conquest led the sons of Greece,
Betrayed him, with pollution stained his bed;
And, conscious of her guilt, sought not t' atone it,
But, to escape his righteous vengeance, poured
Destruction on his head, and killed my father.
Now by the gods, though in a charge of blood
Ill it becomes me to invoke the gods,
Had I in silence tamely borne her deeds,
Would not the murdered, justly hating me,
Have roused the Furies to torment my soul?
Or hath she only her assisting fiends,
And he no fav'ring power t' avenge his wrongs?
Thou, when to that bad daughter thou gavst birth,
Didst give me ruin; for through her bold crime
I lost my father, and my mother slew.
Seest thou Ulysses' wife? Telemachus
Shed not her blood; for she, unstained with vice,
Guards her chaste bed with spotless sanctity.
Seest thou Apollo, who to mortal ears
Sounds from his central cave the voice of truth?
Him we obey in all that he commands:
Obeying his commands, I slew my mother;
Drag him then to your bar, put him to death;
The guilt is his, not mine. What should I do?
The guilt on him transferred, is not the god
Sufficient to absolve me? Where shall man
Find refuge, if the god, at whose command
I did it, will not now save me from death?
Then say not that these deeds were done not well,
But to the doers most unhappily.
If well accorded, the connubial state
From all its strings speaks perfect harmony;

If ill, at home, abroad, the harsh notes jar,
And with rude discord wound the ear of Peace.

Chorus. That Peace to wound always our sex was born,
Augmenting by our ills the ills of men.

Tynd. What, dost thou brave me, and in proud defiance
So answer, as to pierce my heart with grief?
This pride will fire me more to urge thy death.
One honest task I'll add to that which drew me
Hither, to grace my murdered daughter's tomb:
This instant to th' assembled Argives go,
And rouse the willing state, an easy task,
To crush thee, and thy sister: she deserves,
E'en more than thou, to die, whose accursed tongue
Added new fierceness to thy fierce intents,
Thine ears assailing with some bitter speech,
That Agamemnon's shade haunted her dreams,
That the tremendous powers below abhorred
Th' adulterous bed, foul e'en to man's gross sense,
Till all this house blazed in the flames she kindled.
I tell thee, Menelaus, and I will do it,
If thou regard my hate, or my alliance,
Protect him not, by the just gods I charge thee,
But leave him to the rigour of the laws,
Or never dare to tread on Spartan ground.
Hear me, and mark me: league not with the vile,
Nor scorn thy friends, whose breasts with virtue glow.
Here, my attendants, lead me from this house.

ORESTES, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

Orestes. Why get thee gone, that I may plead to him,
Uninterrupted by the wayward age.—
Why dost thou bend that way, then backward turn,
Thoughtful thy step, absorbed in anxious care?

Mene. Forbear, and leave me to my thoughts, perplexed
And unresolved which cause I should espouse.

Orestes. Suspend awhile thy judgment; hear me first,
First hear my plea; weigh it, and then resolve.

Mene. Speak; thou hast reason. Wisdom sometimes loves
To dwell with silence, sometimes woos the ear.

Orestes. Then let me urge my plea; and, oh! forgive me
If I seem tedious: grief is fond of words.

Give me not aught of thine, only return
What from my father's grace thou hast received.
I ask not thy rich treasures, yet a treasure
Richer than all thy stores: I ask my life.
Is this unjust? Let me from thee receive
Something unjust: such Agamemnon was,
Who led to Troy th' united arms of Greece:
Yet was the wrong not his; but to avenge
Thy wife's incontinent and foul offence.
For all his dangers, all his toils in war,
Borne as becomes a friend, in a friend's cause,
Give me one day for his ten years in arms:
To vindicate thy honour, one short day
Stand firm, my friend, the guardian of my life.
For thee at Aulis my poor sister died;
I am content, nor ask Hermione
A sacrifice for me. In my distress
Protect me, pity me; I ask no more.
To my unhappy father grant my life,
And save my sister, save her virgin years.
The house of Agamemnon sinks with me.
Impossible thou'lt say: "When danger threats,
The friend comes forth resolved, and shields his friend:
In fortune's golden smiles what need of friends?
Her fav'ring power wants no auxiliary.
Greece sees thou lovst thy wife." I speak not this
In flattery, to wind into thy bosom;
But I conjure thee by that love—Ah me!
How am I fall'n! Not for myself alone
I pour my prayer, but for my father's house.
Now by the kindred blood, whose royal tide
Rolls in thy veins; by each endearing tie
Of fond relation and fraternal love,
Think that my murdered father's injured shade
Burst from the realms of death, and hovers o'er thee;
And think, oh, think the words I speak are his.
'Tis for my life I plead, life's dear to all,
With sighs, with groans, with tears: save me, oh, save me!

Chorus. Low at thy knees a woman joins her prayer;
Oh, save them, save th' unhappy, for thou canst!

Mene. I hold thee dear, Orestes, and am willing

To give my friendly aid in thy distress;
Th' affinity of blood calls loudly on us
To share its toils, if the gods grant the power,
Nor shrink appalled at danger or at death;
And much I wish the gods would grant this power:
But with a thousand toils oppressed I come,
And lift a single spear, whose glitt'ring point
No squadrons follow wedged in firm array;
Few my remaining friends, and small my force.
With Argos then should we engage in arms,
We could not conquer; but with gentle words
Perchance we may: this way Hope smiles on us
Who would with feeble forces aim at deeds
Of perilous proof? 'Twere folly to attempt it.
When roused to rage the madd'ning populace storms,
Their fury, like a rolling flame, bursts forth
Unquenchable; but give its violence way,
It spends itself, and as its force abates
Learns to obey, and yields it to your will:
Their passions varying thus, now rough with rage,
Now melting with soft pity, Wisdom marks
The change, and turns it to a rich account.
Thus Tyndarus I will move, and th' Argive state,
To use their supreme power with gentleness.
The gallant bark, that too much swells her sails,
Oft is o'erset, but let her pride be lowered,
She rides secure, and glories in the gale.
Impetuous rage is hateful to the gods,
Hateful to men: with cool unpassioned reason
(Discretion guides my words) I must preserve thee,
And not, as thou perchance mayst deem, by force;
Against the stronger what can force avail?
Its trophies can my single spear erect
Victorious o'er the ills that now assault thee?
To be a suitor hath not been my use
At Argos, but Necessity will teach us,
If wise, submission to the power of Fortune.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

Orestes. Thou doughty champion of thy wife, good else
For nought, in thy friend's cause a coward base,

Thus dost thou slight me, turn thee thus away?
Are Agamemnon's favours thus repaid?
Thou hadst no friend, my father, in thy ills.
Ah me! I am betrayed; e'en Hope forsakes me,
And leaves me unprotected to my fate,
Who on his shelt'ring power alone relied.—
But from his Phocians, see, with hasty step
Here comes a friend indeed, my Pylades!
A pleasing sight: for in distress a friend
Comes like a calm to the tossed mariner.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS.

Pylades. With swift pace speed I through the city, hearing
Their counsels, and discerning their intents
T' adjudge thee and thy sister to quick death.
But what! How fares my friend? What thy design?
Thou partner of my soul, companion dear,
Friend, kinsman, brother: thou art all to me.
Orestes. To speak my woes in brief then, we are lost.
Pylades. Then in thy ruin is thy friend involved.
Orestes. The Spartan views us with malignant eye.
Pylades. A vile wife to a husband matched as vile.
Orestes. To me no joy doth his arrival bring.
Pylades. Is he indeed then at this land arrived?
Orestes. Late, but soon found unfaithful to his friends.
Pylades. And brought he his disloyal wife with him?
Orestes. In truth he brought not her, but she brought him.
Pylades. Where is this pest, that hath unpeopled Greece?
Orestes. Here in my house, if I may call it mine.
Pylades. What to thy father's brother didst thou say?
Orestes. Not to see me and my poor sister slain.
Pylades. Now, by the gods, what answer did he give?
Orestes. Timid and cautious, like a faithless friend.
Pylades. With what excuses his denial cloked?
Orestes. The father of these female worthies came.
Pylades. Incensed and chafing for his daughter's death?
Orestes. E'en so; for him my father was disdained.
Pylades. And wants he courage here t' assert thy cause?
Orestes. No warrior he, but among women brave.
Pylades. Then have thy woes their full weight; thou must die.
Orestes. First the deciding vote must pass against us.

Pylades. Deciding what? I tremble as I ask.
Orestes. Or life or death. Few words speak great events.
Pylades. Fly then, and with thy sister leave this house.
Orestes. Seest thou the guards that close their weapons round?
Pylades. Each street I saw, each pass secured with arms.
Orestes. We are invested, like a sea-girt town.
Pylades. Mine also is misfortune, ruin mine.
Orestes. Ruin! From whence? Thy ills augment my woes.
Pylades. My father in his rage hath banished me.
Orestes. What, on some public, or a private charge?
Pylades. As impious, aiding in thy mother's death.
Orestes. Unhappy, shalt thou suffer in my ills?
Pylades. I shall not, like the Spartan, shrink from them.
Orestes. Like mine, should Argos meditate thy death!
Pylades. They have no right; I am no subject here.
Orestes. The many, when bad rulers prompt to ill,
Regard no rights.
Pylades. But when good lead to good,
Their counsels well advised breathe temperate wisdom.
Orestes. Well, be it so. But shall we now consult
Our common good?
Pylades. Propose th' important theme.
Orestes. To urge my plea before them.
Pylades. Vindicate
Thy deed as righteous?
Orestes. Righteous, as avenging
My father's blood.
Pylades. Harshly, I fear, their brows
Will frown upon thee.
Orestes. Should fear hold me mute,
And yield me tame to death?
Pylades. Unmanly that.
Orestes. What should I do?
Pylades. Hast thou, remaining here,
Prospect of safety?
Orestes. Safety dwells not here.
Pylades. In going hast thou hope?
Orestes. Should it take well,
It might succeed.
Pylades. Attempt it boldly then;
Go: if to die, 'tis nobler to die there.
Orestes. My cause is just.

Pylades. Would heaven they so may think!
Orestes. Thus I avoid the charge of guilty fear.
Some one, indignant at my father's death,
Perchance may pity me.
Pylades. I see it all,
And the bright lustre thy high birth throws round thee.
Orestes. I will not stay, and like a coward slave
Die tamely here.
Pylades. I praise thy noble spirit.
Orestes. But to my sister shall we make this known?
Pylades. No, I conjure thee.
Orestes. She would be all tears
Pylades. Avoid the omen then; in silence go;
Nor let her grief unseasonably detain thee.
Orestes. Yet one distress afflicts me; should the Furies
Rouse all their terrors, and affright my soul.
Pylades. My care shall watch around thee.
Orestes. To attend
A man disordered thus, to guard, to hold him,
Is an unpleasing office.
Pylades. But for thee
Delightful to my love.
Orestes. Yet have a care
Lest my contagious frenzy seize on thee.
Pylades. No more of frenzy.
Orestes. Wilt thou not be shocked
At this hard task?
Pylades. No office shocks a friend.
Orestes. Be thou my pilot then.
Pylades. A welcome charge
Orestes. And guide my footsteps to my father's tomb
That I may pour my supplications there,
And move his shade to aid me.
Pylades. Pious this,
And just.
Orestes. But from my mother's lead me far:
Let me not see it.
Pylades. All is hostile there.
But haste thee, ere the fatal vote be passed.
Lean on me, let me throw my arm around thee,
Thus hold thee, thus support thy feeble limbs,
And bear thee through the crowd of gazing eyes

Regardless. Where shall friendship show its faith,
If now in thy afflictions I forsake thee?

Orestes. This is to have a friend: compared to this
What are the ties of blood? The man who melts
With social sympathy, though not allied,
Is than a thousand kinsmen of more worth.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Th' exalted state, th' imperial power,
Which spread o'er Greece its ample sway,
And, girt with war, on the barbaric shore
Taught the proud streams of Simois to obey,
Withdraw their glories. Discord (as of old
Fierce 'midst the sons of Tantalus she rose,
And for the rich ram fleeced with gold
Prepared the feast of horrid woes,
Whence Vengeance bared the flaming sword,
And blood for blood remorseless poured)
Now through the house of Atreus lords it wide,
And filled with carnage swells her sanguine pride.

Antistrophe.

Honour is honour now no more,
Since with fierce rage he dared invade
His parent's breast, and, his hand stained with gore,
Waved to the golden sun his crimson blade.
Ill actions are displeasing to the skies,
And moon-eyed Folly marks them for her own.
Heardst thou not Clytemnestra's cries,
Her thrilling shrieks, her dying moan?
"The mother by the son to bleed!
Ah, dare not: 'tis an impious deed:
Nor, in wild rev'rence to thy father's name,
Blot with eternal infamy thy fame!"

Epode.

Is there in all heaven's angry store
Misfortune, sorrow, sickness, pain,

Is there an ill that racks, that tortures more
Than by th' unpitying son the parent slain?
Ah spare, unhappy youth, thy mother spare!—
'Tis done: like vultures see the Furies rise,
And rend his soul with wild despair:
See how he rolls his haggard eyes!
When from her gold-embroidered vest
Suppliant she bared her heaving breast,
Ah, couldst thou strike?—He struck.—O deed abhorred!
And ruthless in her bosom plunged the sword.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Electra. Ye virgins, hath the poor Orestes, struck
With madness from the gods, rushed from the house?
Chorus. Not so; but to th' assembled state of Argos
He goes, resolved to strive in this hard contest,
Where life to him and thee, or death's the prize.
Electra. Ah me, what hath he done? Who counselled this?
Chorus. Pylades. But this messenger will tell thee
All that hath passed touching thy brother there.

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Mess. Unhappy daughter of that mighty chief,
Who led the powers of Greece, revered Electra,
How shall my tongue disclose this tale of woe?
Electra. Ah me! We are no more. Thy falt'ring voice
In broken accents speaks the tragic tale.
Mess. Even so: the fatal sentence is pronounced.
This day thy brother and thyself must die.
Electra. Long have my fears, presaging this event,
With mournful expectation sunk my heart.
But was there no debate? Whose ruling voice
Procured this sentence? Tell me, good old man,
Arm they their hands with stones? Or by the sword
Together sink we in one common death?
Mess. I left my rural cottage, and the gates
Of Argos entered, with fond wish to learn
To thee and to Orestes what had chanced,
Prompted by that high reverence which I bore
Thy father; for his house supported me,
Though poor, yet not unfaithful. Soon I saw

The thronging people hurry to that height
Where, as they say, Ægyptus gave them seats
When Danaus was adjudged to punishment.
Astonished at the sight, I asked if war
New threat'ning roused the city thus: an Argive
Gave answer, "Seest thou not Orestes there?
He goes to plead his cause; and life or death
Hangs on his voice." I looked, and near me saw—
O piteous spectacle!—what least I hoped
To see, thy brother: as he walked, his eyes
Fixed on the ground, his fever-weakened limbs,
Supported by his friend, whose faithful care,
Touched with like grief, guided his feeble steps.
Soon as th' assembly sate, the herald's voice
Proclaimed free speech to all who willed to speak,
Whether Orestes for his mother slain
Should die, or not. Talthybius first arose,
Who with thy father stormed the towers of Troy;
Double and dark his speech, as one who lives
The slave of greatness: to thy father high
Respect he paid, but to thy brother's praise
Silent, in honourable terms involved
His ill intent, as that he modelled laws
'Gainst parents not beseeming: but his eye
Always glanced cheerful on Ægisthus' friends:
For such their nature; the warm shine of fortune
Allures them, vassals to the rich and great.
Next rose the royal Diomede: his voice
Allowed not death, but exile, to atone
The deed. Discordant clamours echoed round,
As approbation prompted or dislike.
An Argive, not an Argive, next arose,
His birth barbaric, of licentious tongue,
Presumptuous, turbulent, and prompt to lead
With empty noise the populace to ill:
For the smooth tongue, that charms to mischief, bears
A pestilent power; whilst Wisdom, aiming still
At virtue, brings its honourable thought,
Though late, to glorious issue. Her grave voice
Authority, that owes its best grace to it,
Should countenance, and check the factious tongue.
This wretch, suborned by Tyndarus, clamoured loud

For death, the harshest death, involving thee
In the same ruin. But another rose
Of different sentiment; no sightly gaud,
But one in whose plain form the eye might note
A manly, free, direct integrity,
Tempered with prudence: one who rarely joined
The city circles, in his small domain,
Which his own culturing hand had taught to smile,
Passing in honest peace his blameless days.
His voice to Agamemnon's son decreed
A crown, his noble father who avenged
By slaying that abandoned impious woman,
Whose vile deeds checked the soldier's generous flame;
For who in distant fields, at honour's call,
Would wield his martial arms, if in his absence
Pollution stain his wife, and his pure bed
Be made a foul sty of adulterous lust?
The virtuous all approved. Orestes now,
Preventing further argument, advanced,
And thus addressed them: "Ye illustrious Argives,
Who from a line of ancient heroes draw
Your high-born race, to vindicate your honour,
Not less than to avenge my father's death,
I did this deed! For should the husband's blood
Leave on the wife's hand no foul stain, full soon
The purple tide would flow, or you must sink—
O shame to manhood!—vile slaves to your wives.
Now she, that to my father's bed was false,
Hath died for it. If you require my life,
The law hath lost its force; and who shall say
His own life is secure, as these bold deeds
From frequency draw force and mock at justice?"
These truths were lost in air; and that vile talker,
Whose malice called for death to both, prevailed.
Harsh was the sentence, and th' unhappy youth
Scarce gained this sad indulgence, leave to die
By his own hand this day. Thou too must die.
Him from th' assembly Pylades with tears
Leads this way, by a few, a faithful few,
Accompanied, whose eyes, melting with pity
Rain bitter dew. He comes, a dismal sight

To pierce thy soul with grief. But haste, prepare
The sword: thou too must die: thy high-born race
Avails not, nor the Oracle of Phœbus,
Whose fatal answer brings destruction on you.

Chorus. Why, miserable virgin, dost thou bend
Thy clouded eye to th' earth? Why silent thus?
Give thy griefs voice, and let thy sorrows flow.

ELECTRA.

Strophe.

Yes, I will let my sorrows flow,
And give to grief the melancholy strain,
And, as the mournful notes complain
With all the heartfelt agony of woe,
These hands my bleeding cheeks shall tear,
And beat this head in wild despair,
Devoted to the queen, that rules beneath
The realms of darkness and of death.
Daughters of Argos, with loud shrieks deplore
The house of Atreus, now no more.
Fall'n, by too severe a fate,
From the proud glories of its splendent state.

Antistrophe.

Low, low they lie, th' imperial line,
Th' imperial race of Pelops vanished, gone;
No trace remains, no name, no son;
Their vaunted honours in the dust decline.
From envious gods these ruins come,
And the harsh city's bloody doom.
Short is the day of life, each little hour
With toils, with mis'ries clouded o'er;
Should bright'ning hope, to cheer the troubled day,
Pour through the gloom a transient ray,
Fate comes, and o'er the darkened scene
Spreads the deep horrors of its dreary reign.

Epode.

Oh for an eagle's wing, whose rapid flight
Might bear me to th' ethereal height,
Where to Olympus fixed the golden chain

Suspends the pond'rous, trembling mass:
There should my woe-wild notes complain
To the hoar author of my race.
From Tantalus our lineage springs,
A mighty race of sceptred kings:
Great as they are, around them wait
The vengeful ministers of fate;
Since Pelops, with impetuous force,
Lashed his proud steeds, and urged their fiery course;
And as the bounding wheels they bore
Along Geræstus' rock-rough shore,
Saw Myrtilus extended there,
Hurled headlong from the rapid car;
With gloomy joy he smiled, and gave
The mangled limbs to stain the foaming wave.
To Atreus thence pernicious came
From Maia's son the fatal Ram,
Who gave his golden fleece to shine
Destructive, a destructive sign.
Hence, Discord, hence thy horrid deeds
Startled the sun's indignant steeds;
Back to the East they wing their way,
And meet the Morn's affrighted ray;
The Pleiads, hast'ning to advance,
Start back, and change their sevenfold dance
Hence false Aërope in honeyed smiles
Concealed her wanton, ruinous wiles;
Hence to Thyestes' horrid feast
Came slaughter, a tremendous guest;
And, her hand reeking with my father's blood,
Draws from my heart the purple flood.

Chorus. But see thy brother, by the Argive state
Condemned to bleed, advances slow; and with him
The faithful Pylades, with a brother's love,
Shares in his griefs, and guides his feeble steps.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

Electra. Ah me, my brother! Whilst I yet behold thee
Let me indulge my grief, ere yet the tomb,
Yet ere the solemn pyre in its black shade

Wraps our dead limbs, let me indulge my grief,
My frentic grief; fix my fond eyes upon thee,
That never, never must behold thee more.

Orestes. Wilt thou not cease these womanish wailings, meet
This harsh decree with silence, and abide,
Firmly abide the rigour of our fate?

Electra. Can I be silent, when our eyes no more
Shall see yon golden sun's irradiate light?

Orestes. Kill me not thou; forbear! Enough of death
Have I already from the hands of Argos.

Electra. Thy youth I mourn, and thy untimely death;
Life was thy due, when, ah! thou art no more.

Orestes. Now by the gods, throw not this softness round me,
Nor make th' unmanly tear drop at our woes.

Electra. We die; and shall the tear not flow? That dew
Pity will shed o'er the lost joys of life.

Orestes. This day must we needs die; prepare we then
The sword, or other instrument of death.

Electra. My brother, do thou kill me; let no Argive
Touch with his rude hand Agamemnon's daughter.

Orestes. No: in thy mother's blood I have enough;
I shed not thine; but by thy own hand die.

Electra. I will; and not desert thy honest sword.
But let me throw my fond arms round thy neck.

Orestes. Vain is the joy, if yet it be a joy,
In death to soothe thee with a last embrace.

Electra. My brother! O that dearest, best-loved name,
Dear to thy sister, partner of my soul!

Orestes. Why wilt thou melt me thus? And yet I wish,
Returning thy embrace, to fold thee close,
Close in my arms; nor modesty forbids;
It is my sister. Let me clasp thee then,
And press thee to my bosom, fondly press thee.
This sweet exchange of love is all our woes
Allow us for the names of wedded joys.

Electra. Oh, may the same sword end us, the same tomb
Close in its cedar hearsement our cold limbs!

Orestes. That would be joy; but destitute of friends
Who shall inurn us in one common tomb?

Electra. Did Menelaus my father then betray?
Did not the wretch plead earnest for thy life?

Orestes. He durst not show his false eye; but, his hopes

Fixed on the sceptre, feared to save his friends.
But let us in our death give shining proof
Of our illustrious birth; my hand shall show
My high nobility, and plunge the sword
Intrepid through my breast: dare thou the like.
Thou, Pylades, be umpire of our death;
With decent care compose our breathless limbs,
And lay them in my father's sepulchre.
Farewell! I go to execute the deed.

Pylades. Yet stay; one charge against thee must I bring,
Shouldst thou but hope I would survive thy death.

Orestes. And what avails it that thou die with me?

Pylades. Without thy converse what can life avail?

Orestes. Thou hast not slain thy mother: I slew mine.

Pylades. I shared the deed: the suffring I should share.

Orestes. Oh, save thee for thy father; die not with me:
Thou hast a country; that name's lost to me:
Thou hast a father's house, hast greatness, wealth.
If this ill-fated maid, whom to thy arms,
The sanction of our friendship, I betrothed—
If she be lost, some other nuptial bed
Awaits to bless thee with a father's joys.
Our dear relation is no more: my friend,
Thou, whose sweet converse was my soul's delight,
Farewell! For thee the joys of life remain;
To us they wither in the shade of death.

Pylades. Wide from my honest purpose dost thou stray.
May not the fertile earth, nor the bright air
Receive my blood, if ever I forsake thee,
To spare myself if ever I forsake thee.
Together I designed, together wrought
Thy mother's death, which draws this fate on thee:
Together will I die with thee, and her:
Dear to my soul, affianced to my bed,
I deem her as my wife. Should I return
To Delphi, the high citadel of Phocis,
Dare I name honour, if united thus,
Whilst fortune favoured your high state, but now
The false friend shrink from your adversity?
Not so: these things demand my deep regard.
Yet, ere we die, some measures let us form
T' afflict with grief the heart of Menelaus.

Orestes. Let me see that, my friend, then let me die!
Pylades. Be then advised, and let the keen sword wait.
Orestes. Shall then my just revenge burst on his head?
Pylades. No more: these women; I distrust their faith.
Orestes. They are all truth, all friendship; fear them not.
Pylades. Let us slay Helen: that would grieve his soul.
Orestes. How? I approve it, be it nobly done.
Pylades. Let the sword end her: in thy house she lurks.
Orestes. She doth, and seals its treasures for her own.
Pylades. Espoused to Pluto she will seal no more.
Orestes. But how, around her that barbaric train?
Pylades. What are they? For the Phrygians nought I dread.
Orestes. Marshals of mirrors and cosmetic washes.
Pylades. Brings she these Trojan gewgaws back to Greece?
Orestes. Greece! 'Tis a paltry spot; she breathes not in it.
Pylades. Well may the free disdain a host of slaves.
Orestes. T' achieve this deed, twice would I die with joy.
Pylades. Twice would I die, might I thy vengeance aid.
Orestes. Disclose thy purpose, and accomplish it.
Pylades. We enter, as in readiness to die.
Orestes. Thus far I comprehend thee, but no more.
Pylades. To her with loud laments bewail our fate.
Orestes. T' extort the tear, though her heart bounds with joy.
Pylades. This be her hour: the next may we enjoy.
Orestes. How then to execute the destined deed?
Pylades. Bear we our swords concealed beneath our vests.
Orestes. But can destruction reach her 'midst her train?
Pylades. Confined apart nought shall that crew avail.
Orestes. And if one dares to clamour, let him die.
Pylades. In that th' immediate exigence will guide us.
Orestes. The death of Helen then, that is the word.
Pylades. Agreed. That honour dictates this, now hear.
To draw the sword against a virtuous woman
Would blot our names with infamy. Her blood
All Greece demands, for sons, for fathers slain
In her cursed cause, for the deep sigh that rends
The widowed matron's desolated heart.
Shouts of applause would rend the air, thick fires
Blaze to the gods, and many a fervent prayer
Draw blessings on our heads. No longer called
The murderer of thy mother, thou shalt hear
Th' applauding voice of Greece with triumph hail thee

Revenger of the mischief-working Helen.
What, shall the treacherous Menelaus then smile,
Proud of his high success; and, whilst thy father,
Thyself, thy sister fall, thy mother too,
(But I forbear; for honour at her name
Dims its pale fires,) seize thy rich-treasured house
As his inheritance, and in amorous folds
Clasp his fair wife, by Agamemnon's spear
Recovered to his arms? Let me not live,
If I not draw the gloomy sword against her.
Failing in this, we'll set the house on flames,
And nobly in the blazing ruins die.
One must succeed: the glory shall be ours
To die with honour, or with honour live.

Chorus. This guilty fair, a scandal to her sex,
Merits th' abhorrence of each virtuous dame.

Orestes. Life hath no blessing like a prudent friend,
Than treasured wealth more precious, than the power
Of monarchs, and the people's loud applause.
Thou on Ægisthus guidedst my just rage,
Nor in my dangers wast thou absent: now
Thou givst me vengeance on mine enemies,
Nor shrinks thy firm foot back. But I forbear
Nor with intemperate praise thine ear offend.
I will not tamely die, but in my fall
Pull ruin on my foes: they too shall weep,
The traitors; they shall have their share of woe.
Th' illustrious Agamemnon was my sire,
Imperial chief of Greece; no tyrant he,
But clothed with th' awful power of the just gods.
I will not blot his splendours, like a slave
Crouching to death; but with a liberal pride
Throw life away, first glorying in revenge.
Whiche'er succeeds, we triumph: yet if thence
Despair force safety, if the sword should glance
From us and wound their breasts, I have my wish.
Transport is in the thought, and the light words,
Charged with no costly pleasure, soothe my soul.

Electra. And this suggests a thought which lifts my mind
To hope success and safety to us all.

Orestes. The prescience of a god inspires thy voice.
But how? Oh say, for wisdom too is thine.

Electra. Then hear; and thou, my brother, mark my words.
Orestes. Speak: there is pleasure in the hope of good.
Electra. The daughter of this Helen dost thou know?
Orestes. The fair Hermione, our mother's charge?
Electra. She now is gone to Clytemnestra's tomb.
Orestes. With what intent? Thy words awaken hope.
Electra. To pour libations for her mother there.
Orestes. As means of safety dost thou tell me this?
Electra. Her, when she enters, as an hostage seize.
Orestes. And what relief can thy thoughts hope from her?
Electra. If Menelaus shall for his slaughtered wife
Attempt revenge on thee, or me, or him
(For the close bond of friendship makes us one),
Tell him that thou wilt kill Hermione,
And hold the drawn sword to the virgin's breast:
If trembling for his daughter, when he sees
His wife all welt'ring in her blood, he saves
Thy life, the virgin give him back unhurt.
But should his wild ungovernable rage
Demand thy life, plunge deep th' unpitying steel.
Yet I am well assured his rage, though fierce
At first, will soften soon; for Nature formed him
Nor bold, nor brave: this then I deem the fort
That guards our lives. You have what I advise.
Orestes. Thou excellence, that to the form divine,
The sweet attractive charm of female grace,
Hast joined a manly spirit, shalt thou die?
Shalt thou, my friend, deplore her loss, with whom,
Accomplished as she is, a life of love
Were happiness supreme?
Pylades. Would heaven indulge
My warm wish, tow'red Phocis should receive her,
With golden Hymen smiling in our train.
Orestes. When will Hermione return? Our toils,
If we can take the young one, must succeed,
And gloriously entangle the old savage.
Electra. Each moment, such the distance, I expect her.
Orestes. 'Tis well. My sister, my Electra, wait
Here, and receive the virgin. Let thine eye
Keep wary watch; if friend, or partisan,
Or e'en my father's brother to the house
Approach to hinder us, some signal give,

Or beat the door, or raise thy shrilling voice.
And now, my friend, still faithful to my toils,
Address we to this great emprise, and ent'ring
Each with the sword of justice arm our hands.
And thou, who in the gloomy house of night
Hast thy sad dwelling, father, royal shade,
Thy son, Orestes, calls thee! At my prayers
Assistant come: for thee these sufferings fall
Unjustly on my head, for my just deeds.
Betrayed by thy base brother, 'gainst his wife
My stern intents are bent: aid our revenge.

Electra. Father, if in the realms beneath thou hear
Thy children call, oh come! For thee we die.

Pylades. Spirit of Agamemnon, kindred shade,
Hear me too, hear thy suppliant: save thy children!

Orestes. I slew my mother.

Pylades. My hand touched the sword.

Electra. And my bold counsels prompted to the deed.

Orestes. T' avenge thee, father.

Electra. Nor did I betray thee.

Pylades. Hear this, indignant shade, and save thy children!

Orestes. Accept th' oblation of these tears.

Electra. Accept
These groans.

Pylades. Now cease; and haste we to the deed.
If to the realms beneath prayers wing their way,
He hears. Thou Jove, our great progenitor,
Awfully just, to him, to me, to her
Extend thy guardian power; this trinal band
One cause, one safety, or one ruin joins:
We live together or together die.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Electra. Virgins of high Pelasgian race,
Achaia's pride, Mycenæ's grace!

Chorus. Why, royal maid, these plaintive strains?
That name, that title yet remains.

Electra. Divide, divide! With careful view
Watch you the street, the entrance you.

Chorus. And why to us this task assigned?
Unfold, sweet friend, unfold thy mind.

Electra. Lest any, standing near the gate,
Find in this scene of blood her fate.
Semi. I. Haste, to your stations quickly run:
My watch be towards the rising sun.
Semi. II. Be mine with cautious care addrest
To where he sinks him in the west.
Electra. Now here, now there, now far, now nigh,
Quick glancing dart th' observant eye.
Semi. I. With fond affection we obey,
Our eyes quick glancing ev'ry way.
Electra. Glance through that length of hair, which flows
Light waving o'er your shaded brows.
Semi. I. This way a man comes hast'ning down;
His garb bespeaks some simple clown.
Electra. Undone, undone, should he disclose
These couched, armed lions to their foes.
Semi. I. He passes on, suppress thy fear,
And all this way again is clear.

ELECTRA, *to* 2nd SEMICHORUS.

And that way doth no footstep rude
Disturb the wished-for solitude?
Semi. II. This way no rude step beats the ground,
But all is still, all safe around.
Electra. Patience exhausted bears no more:
Near will I listen at the door.
Favoured with silence, why so slow
To let the purple torrent flow?
Blinded by beauty's dazzling ray
Do your charmed swords refuse t' obey?
They hear not. Roused at these alarms
Some Argive soon will rush in arms;
And in her aid vindictive spread
Horror and ruin on our head.
Watch, virgins, watch with strictest care,
Repose hath nothing to do here.
Chorus. With transverse watch our heedful eye
Each various way——
Helena. Io, Pelasgian Argos, I am slain! [*Within.*
Electra. Hark! Their bold hands are in the bloody act.
It was the cry of Helena, I deem.

Chorus. O Jove, eternal power, hear us, and ever
Protect our friends!
Helena. My dearest Menelaus,
I die! Where art thou? Fly, oh fly to save me!
Electra. Kill, slay, strike, wound, dispatch, destroy:
With iron smiles of gloomy joy
Plunge deep the huge tempestuous blade,
For blood, for death, for carnage made,
Deep in her breast. She basely fled
Her father's house, her husband's bed:
Hence many a Greek in battle slain
Lies mould'ring on the Phrygian plain:
Hence, to call forth the bursting tear,
The arrowy shower, the hurtling spear,
And hence Scamander's silver flood
Whirls his swoln eddies stained with blood.
Chorus. Hark! hark! I hear the sound of feet:
The marble pavement now they beat.
Electra. Whilst slaughter is at work, my virgin friends,
Hermione comes: cease we the measure then:
She walks into our toils, a goodly prize.
Silent resume your stations; fixed your eye,
Let not your countenance betray the deed.
My eye shall take again its mournful cast,
As unacquainted with this havoc here.

HERMIONE, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Electra. From Clytemnestra's tomb comest thou, virgin
Thy hallowed offerings and libations paid?
Herm. I have appeased her shade. But from this house
The voice of loud lament ere my approach
Struck my astonished ear: it makes me tremble.
Electra. Well it beseems us: we have cause for cries.
Herm. Be thy voice tuned to good. Is there aught new?
Electra. Orestes and myself are doomed to die.
Herm. Be it not so, by blood to me allied!
Electra. Necessity lays its iron yoke on us.
Herm. For this did these laments sound from the house?
Electra. Suppliant at Helen's feet he raised the cry.
Herm. Who? For my knowledge on thy words depends.
Electra. The poor Orestes, for his life and mine.

Herm. Just cause for lamentation hath this house.
Electra. Can nature know a stronger? But come thou,
Join in the supplication of thy friends,
Fall at thy mother's knees—how blest her state!—
That Menelaus allow not that we die.
O thou, who from my mother's hand receivdst
Thy infant nurture, look with pity on us,
Our woes alleviate, to the trial go:
My foot shall lead, sweet prop of all our hopes!
Herm. And willingly I follow: if my voice,
My prayers, my power avail, ye shall not die.
Electra. You there within the house, ye armèd friends,
Will you not seize your prey?
Herm. Ah, who are these
Terrible to mine eye!
Orestes. No noise, no cry! [*Advancing.*
To us, not to thyself, thou bringest safety.
Electra. Here, seize her, seize her! To her trembling breast
Point your keen swords, and awe her into silence.
Let Menelaus perceive he hath found men,
Not Phrygian slaves: men, whose bold spirits dare
Retort his foul wrongs on his own base head.
[*They lead her off.*
Now, my loved virgins, raise your voices high;
Before the house ring out the notes of woe,
That this bold deed spread no alarm, nor call
Th' astonished Argives to these royal gates,
Till I see Helen rolling in her blood,
Or from the slaves attending learn her fate.
Chorus. Justice unsheathed her awful sword,
And Vengeance snatched it from her hand:
From heaven her rapid flight she poured,
And plunged in Helen's breast the glitt'ring brand.
For this accursed, this fatal fair
Filled Greece with many a mournful tear,
Since the pernicious Phrygian boy
Enamoured bore her wanton charms to Troy.
Hush, hush! the palace door resounds; break off.
A Phrygian slave comes forth: learn we from him
What fate hath wrought within.

PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

Phry. The Grecian sword from death I fled,
In these barbaric sandals was my flight,
Climbing the pillar's sculptured head,
And o'er the cedar rafter's height:
For th' unkind earth refused to save
A flying, a barbaric slave.
Whither, ah, whither shall I fly?
Oh say, ye virgin strangers, say,
Mount the grey regions of the sky,
Or through the foaming billows dash my way,
Where, the firm globe encircling wide,
Vexed Ocean rolls his roaring tide?

Chorus. Servant of Helen, Phrygian, whence these cries?

Phry. O Ilium, Ilium! Woe, woe, woe!
Ye towers, the fertile Phrygia's stately boast!
O sacred Ida's pine-crowned brow!
I mourn, I mourn your glories lost:
For you these doleful notes complain,
A mournful, a barbaric strain.
From Leda's egg, the Swan her sire,
The beauteous, baleful Helen rose:
Whose eye on heaven-built Troy glares fire,
And the rich seat of Ganymede o'erthrows:
Hence flows, for chiefs, for heroes slain,
The mournful, the barbaric strain.

Chorus. No longer hold us in suspense; relate
Each circumstance: conjecture errs from truth.

Phry. It is the song of death; your pardon then
That I indulged the melancholy strain.
In Asia with barbaric voice we raise
These notes of woe, when by the ruthless sword
The blood of kings is shed upon the earth.
But to my tale. Of lion port came in
Two of your Grecians: father to the one
Th' illustrious leader of your troops: and one
The son of Strophius, of deep reserve,
And dang'rous, dark design; such was the chief
Of Ithaca, but faithful to his friends,
In battle bold, and in the works of war
Of sage experience; as a dragon fierce.
Perdition on his silence, which concealed

Designs of death. Together they advanced
To the bright queen whom Paris called his wife,
Their eyes suffused with tears, humble their mien,
And at her knees, on each side one, they fell
Besieging her. Back start the slaves, back starts
Each Phrygian minister, some fearing fraud,
More unsuspicious some, whilst others thought
This dragon, crimson with his mother's blood,
The beauteous Spartan in his toils enclosed.

Chorus. Where then wast thou? Hadst thou first fled through fear?

Phry. I then was standing, in our Phrygian mode
Was standing near, and with the feathered fan
Raised the soft gales to breathe upon her cheeks,
In our barbaric mode, to bid their breath
Sport in the ringlets of her waving hair.
Her curious fingers guide the thread, the spoils
Of Phrygia, whose rich texture formed the woof
T' adorn the purple pall, a mournful present
To Clytemnestra. With mild voice Orestes
Entreats her to arise, and go with him
To an age-honoured altar, in old times
The seat of Pelops, his great ancestor,
That she might hear his words. He led her, ah!
He led her! Unprophetic of her fate
She followed. The vile Phocian, his compeer,
Seized the occasion, and with stern command
Bade us be gone; then, dragged to separate cells,
Confined us from our royal mistress far.

Chorus. What terrible event ensued? Oh, say!

Phry. Goddess of Ida, potent, potent queen!
What scenes of blood, what impious deeds these eyes,
These eyes amidst the royal rooms beheld!
Each in his fierce hand grasped the sword concealed
Beneath their purple vests, his fiery glance,
Heedful of interruption, darting round;
Then, like two mountain boars, before the queen
They stood, and thundered, "Thou shalt die, shalt die;
Thy coward husband kills thee, who in Argos
Betrays his brother's family to death."
She shrieked aloud, and raising her white arm
In miserable manner beat her head;

Then bent her golden-sandalled feet to flight.
But, rushing fierce, Orestes in her hair
Locked his rude hand, and bending to the left
Her head, prepared to plunge th' impetuous sword
Deep in her throat.

Chorus. Where were her Phrygians then?

They ran, belike, on all sides to her aid.

Phry. Roused by her cries we burst the bars, and each
From forth his separate cell rushed to her aid.
Some in their hasty hands snatched stones, some seized
The beamy spear, th' unwieldy falchion some:
'Gainst us in dreadless rage the Phocian came,
Fierce as the Trojan Hector, fierce as Ajax,
Whose triple-crested helm I saw, I saw
Dreadfully waving in the gates of Priam.
Clashing our swords met his; but then, oh then
Was seen how weak, how spiritless our arms
Opposed in fight against the force of Greece;
One hasty running, dying one, one gashed
With wounds, wild with affright another bends
Imploring mercy; sheltering in the dark
We fly, and all was terror, blood, and death.
Just as th' uplifted sword threatened to shed
Her mother's blood on th' earth, Hermione came;
Swift with unhallowed rage they dart on her,
And seize their trembling prey; then turn again
To execute the work of death on Helen.
Meanwhile, O heaven! O earth! O day! O night!
Forth from the chamber through the vestibule,
Whether by some enchantment, by the power
Of magic, or the stealth of fav'ring gods,
She vanished. What hath happened since I know not,
Intent on hasty flight to save myself.
For all his toils, all his distressful toils,
Barren return hath Menelaus received,
And led his beauteous wife from Troy in vain.

Chorus. Terror succeeds to terror; for mine eyes
Behold Orestes there before the house
Walk with disordered pace, and grasp his sword.

ORESTES, PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

Orestes. Where is the slave, who this way fled my sword?
Phry. Low at thy feet, such our barbaric use,
Thus prostrate I implore thy mercy, king.
Orestes. This is not Ilium, but the land of Greece.
Phry. In any land life to the wise is sweet.
Orestes. Hast thou raised cries to call the Spartan's aid?
Phry. Thee rather would I aid: more worthy thou.
Orestes. This Helen then, with justice did she die?
Phry. Most justly: had she three lives, she should lose them.
Orestes. Thy servile fear smooths thy dissembling tongue.
Phry. No. Should she live who wasted Greece and Troy?
Orestes. Swear, I will kill thee else, thou flatterest not.
Phry. Now by my life I swear, sincerely swear.
Orestes. Was the steel dreadful thus to all at Troy?
Phry. Keep thy sword off: near, it glares terror to me.
Orestes. Freeze not to stone, as seen the Gorgon's head.
Phry. Let me not die; no Gorgon's head I know.
Orestes. Fears a slave death, the end of all his ills?
Phry. To slave or free sweet is the light of heaven.
Orestes. Well urged: thy wisdom saves thee: go thou in.
Phry. Thou wilt not kill me then?
Orestes. In safety go.
Phry. Thy words breathe music.
Orestes. But I may retract
This lenity.
Phry. No music breathes in that.
Orestes. Fool, if thou thinkst thy blood shall stain my sword,
Nor woman thou, nor in the scale of men.
To stop thy clamours came I: Argos soon
Is roused at every noise. For Menelaus
We fear him not: our swords shall welcome him:
Let him then come, proud of his golden locks
That wanton o'er his shoulders. Should he raise
The men of Argos, and for Helen's death
Lead them against this house, and menace me,
My sister, and my friend, he shall behold
His daughter, with his wife, welt'ring in blood.

CHORUS.

Semi. I. Other horrors, other woes
Rise this royal house t' enclose.
Semi. II. Haste we then to spread th' alarm
Or keep silence, shunning harm?
Semi. I. See the sudden smoke arise,
Waving tidings to the skies!
Semi. II. From the torch that dusky wreath
Threatens ruin, flames, and death.
Chorus. What event the gods assign,
Mortal, to submit is thine.
Here some stern relentless power
Bade the horrid ruin roar,
When the blood-stained car beneath
Myrtilus lay rolled in death.
But see, with hasty step the Spartan comes,
Informed, belike, of these rough deeds of death.
Quick, quick, ye royal youths—make fast these gates,
Prevent the foe; for to th' unfortunate,
Like thee, Orestes, dreadful are the wrongs
Of insolent and rude prosperity.

MENELAUS *below*, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, HERMIONE *above*, CHORUS.

Mene. I heard the horrid and atrocious deeds
Of these two lions, men I call them not;
My wife not dead, I hear, but disappeared.
This idle rumour I received from one,
Bewildered with his fears; the bitter scoff,
The artifice of him that slew his mother.
Open the gates here: slaves, I speak to you,
Unbar the gates, that I at least may save
My daughter from their bloody hands, and bear
My poor lost wife away, whose murderers
This vengeful hand should recompense with death.
Orestes. Stand off! forbear! Spartan, I speak to thee
Tow'ring in pride! Dare but to touch the gate,
I will rend down this ancient pinnacle
That crowns the battlements, and crush thy head.
The gates are shut, and barricadoed strong,
To guard me from thy efforts and thy friends'.

Mene. Ha! what is this? What mean these blazing torches?
Why on the battlements this station fixed?
Why at my daughter's bosom points that sword?
Orestes. Is it thy will to question, or to hear me?
Mene. Neither; but by compulsion I must hear thee.
Orestes. Be thou assured, thy daughter I will kill.
Mene. Thou hast killed Helen: wilt thou shed more blood?
Orestes. Would I had killed her, nor the gods beguiled me!
Mene. Her murder dost thou tauntingly deny?
Orestes. With sorrow I deny it: 'twas my wish.
Mene. What to have done? Thy words excite my fear.
Orestes. To sacrifice this baleful pest of Greece.
Mene. Give me the body, that I may entomb it.
Orestes. Ask of the gods: but I will kill thy daughter.
Mene. The mother slain, wilt thou add blood to blood?
Orestes. T' avenge my father; yet betrayed by thee.
Mene. Art thou not sated with thy mother's blood?
Orestes. Never, with punishing such impious women.
Mene. And art thou, Pylades, accomplice with him?
Orestes. His silence speaks: sufficient my reply.
Mene. But short thy joy, unless thou fly on wings.
Orestes. We will not fly: but we will fire the house.
Mene. Thy father's royal seat in ruins sink!
Orestes. That it may ne'er be thine: and at the flames
Her will I sacrifice.
Mene. Ay, kill her, do;
I will have vengeance, ample vengeance on thee.
Orestes. Thus then.
Mene. Ah, stay thee! do not, do not kill her!
Orestes. Be silent now, and with composure bear
Th' afflictions, which with justice light on thee.
Mene. What, is it justice then that thou shouldst live?
Orestes. Live! Ay, and reign.
Mene. Where wouldst thou reign?
Orestes. In Argos,
Pelasgian Argos.
Mene. At the sacred rites
Well would those hands the cleansing lavers touch.
Orestes. And wherefore not?
Mene. And, ere the spear is raised,
Offer the hallowed victim!
Orestes. Dost not thou?

Mene. And well: my hands are pure.
Orestes. But not thy heart.
Mene. Who will hold converse with thee?
Orestes. He that loves
His father.
Mene. He too, who reveres his mother?
Orestes. Happy his state.
Mene. Unhappy then is thine.
Orestes. Because such impious women I abhor.
Mene. Take, from my daughter's bosom take thy sword.
Orestes. False are thy words.
Mene. My daughter wilt thou kill?
Orestes. Now thou speakst truth.
Mene. Ah me, what shall I do?
Orestes. Go to the Argives, and persuade them——
Mene. What
Shall I persuade them?
Orestes. Ask the state to spare
Our lives.
Mene. Or you will kill my daughter?
Orestes. Ay.
Mene. Unhappy Helen!
Orestes. Am not I unhappy?
Mene. From Troy I brought thee to be butchered here.
Orestes. Would it were so!
Mene. After a thousand toils——
Orestes. But not for me.
Mene. These dreadful ills fall on me.
Orestes. Thou hadst no will to serve me.
Mene. Thou hast caught me.
Orestes. No: by thy baseness thou hast caught thyself.
But go, Electra, fire the house below:
And thou, my Pylades, my faithful friend,
Set from these battlements the roof on fire.
Mene. Arm, arm, ye sons of Greece! ye warlike Argives,
Fly to my aid. Despair of life, and guilt
Stained with his mother's blood, prompt his bold hand
In one wide ruin to involve the city.

APOLLO.

Cease, Menelaus, forbear this fiery rage:
Apollo speaks: revere the present god.

And thou, Orestes, whose uplifted sword
Threatens that virgin's life, forbear, and hear.
Her whom thy rage, to work him woe, assailed,
This radiant form in tissued clouds enshrined,
Snatched from thy sword I saved ; such the command
Of heaven's high king : his beauteous progeny
Soars above mortal fate, and orbed in heaven
Immortal 'midst her kindred stars she shines,
Beaming kind influence on the mariners.
Lead to thy royal house another wife ;
Since by her beauty the just gods awoke
'Twixt Greece and Troy the rage of war, to free
The groaning earth from impious multitudes.
Such is the fate of Helen. Thou, Orestes,
Quitting this country, in Parrhasia's plains
For one revolving year thy dwelling fix,
And give the place thy name ; that honour share
With Azan and with Arcas. Pass from thence
To Athens ; there against the Furies urge
Thy plea, acquit thee of thy mother's blood :
There in that awful court the gods shall sit
Thy judges ; and thy just cause shall prevail.
Her, at whose throat thy angry sword was pointed,
The gods decree thy wife ; though Pyrrhus dreams
Of nuptial joys, the Delphic sword awaits him ;
My vengeance on Achilles this demands.
To Pylades thy sister is betrothed ;
Give him his bride : and happiness attends
To pour her blessings on their future years.
Thou, Menelaus, yield that Orestes reign
At Argos : haste to Sparta, reign thou there,
And wear that crown, the dowry of thy wife,
The well-earned meed of all the toils she caused thee.
It shall be mine t' appease the state to him,
Compelled by my command to slay his mother.

Orestes. Thou god of oracles, prophet of good,
True are thy words, and faithful. Yet my soul
Was struck with horror, lest some vengeful power
Spoke this, which I misdeemed thy voice divine.
But all is well. Obedient to thy word
I drop the sword : and, if her father gives her,
Wish to receive Hermione my bride.

Mene. Daughter of Jove, bright Helen, hail! Thy state
'Midst the blest mansions of th' immortal gods
I reverence. Now, Orestes, give I thee
My daughter, at the bidding of the god.
Illustrious in thy race thou takest a wife
Not less illustrious: blessings on thy hand
That takes her, and on mine that gives her to thee.
Apollo. Each now depart, as I commanded: cease
Your strife.
Mene. T' obey is ours.
Orestes. Such are my thoughts.
Now, Menelaus, to all these evils past
My soul speaks peace; and to thy oracles.
Apollo. Go then your ways, now go, and reverence Peace,
Most beauteous of the gods. I will conduct
Th' immortal Helen to the house of Jove
O'er yon star-spangled sky, to the bright seats
Where, with majestic Juno, and the bloom
Of Hebe ever young, Alcides' joy,
A goddess she shall hear the vows of mortals;
And honoured with the twin-born sons of Jove
Guide the tost mariners, and rule the sea.
Chorus. O victory, I revere thy sober triumphs:
Thus ever guard, thus ever crown my life!

ANDROMACHE

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ANDROMACHE.
ATTENDANT.
CHORUS of PHTHIAN WOMEN.
HERMIONE.
MENELAUS.
MOLOSSUS.
PELEUS.
NURSE of HERMIONE.
ORESTES.
MESSENGER.
THETIS.

Scene.—THE VESTIBULE OF THETIS' TEMPLE BETWEEN PHTHIA AND PHARSALIA IN THESSALY.

ANDROMACHE.

O THEBES, thou pride of Asia, from whose gate
I came resplendent with a plenteous dower,
To Priam's regal house, the fruitful wife
Of Hector: his Andromache was erst
An envied name: but now am I more wretched
Than any woman, or already born,
Or to be born hereafter; for I saw
My husband Hector by Achilles slain,
And that unhappy son whom to my lord
I bore, Astyanax, from Troy's high towers
Thrown headlong; when our foes had sacked the city,
Myself descended from a noble line
Of freeborn warriors, reached the Grecian coast,
On Neoptolemus that island prince
For the reward of his victorious arms
Bestowed: selected from the Phrygian spoils.
'Twixt Phthia and Pharsalia, in these fields,
I dwell, where Thetis from the haunts of men
Retreating, with her Peleus erst abode.
By Thessaly's inhabitants, this spot
Is from th' auspicious nuptials of that goddess
Called Thetidæum: here Achilles' son

Residing, suffers Peleus still to rule
Pharsalia's land, nor will assume the sceptre
While lives his aged grandsire. In these walls
A son, who to th' embraces of my lord
Achilles' offspring, owes his birth, I bore,
And though I had been wretched, a fond hope
Still cherished, that while yet the boy was safe
I some protection and relief might find
In my calamities; but since my lord
(Spurning my servile couch) that Spartan dame
Hermione espoused, with ruthless hate
By her am I pursued; for she pretends
That I, by drugs endued with magic power,
Administered in secret, make her barren
And odious to her lord, because I wish
To occupy this mansion in her stead,
And forcibly to drive her from his couch,
To which, at first I with reluctance came,
But now have left it: mighty Jove can witness
That I became the partner of his bed
Against my own consent. But she remains
Deaf to conviction, and attempts to slay me:
In this design her father Menelaus
Assists his daughter, he is now within,
And on such errand left the Spartan realm:
Fearing his rage, I near the palace take
My seat, in Thetis' temple, that the goddess
From death may save me; for both Peleus' self,
And the descendants of that monarch, hold
This structure reared in memory of his wedlock
With the fair Nereid, in religious awe.
But hence, in secret, trembling for his life,
My only child have I conveyed away,
Because his noble father is not present
To aid me, and avails not now to guard
His son, while absent in the Delphic land,
To expiate there the rage with which he sought
The Pythian tripod, and from Phœbus claimed
A reparation for his father's death.
If haply he can deprecate the curses
Attendant on his past misdeeds, and make
The god propitious to his future days.

Female Attendant, Andromache.

Attend. My queen, for still I scruple not to use
The same respectful title which I gave you
When we in Ilion dwelt; you and your lord
While he was living, shared my duteous love,
And now I with important tidings fraught
To you am come, trembling indeed lest one
Of our new rulers overhear the tale,
Yet greatly pitying your disastrous fate:
For Menelaus and his daughter form
Dire plots against you; of these foes beware.

Andro. O my dear fellow-servant (for thou shar'st
Her bondage who was erst thy queen, but now
Is wretched), ah! what mean they? what fresh schemes
Have they devised to take away my life,
Who am by woes encompassed?

Attend. They intend,
O miserable dame, to kill your son,
Whom privately you from this house conveyed.

Andro. Are they informed I sent the child away?
Ah me! who told them? in what utter ruin
Am I involved!

Attend. I know not; but thus much
Of their designs I heard; in quest of him
Is Menelaus from these doors gone forth.

Andro. Then am I lost indeed: for, O my child,
These two relentless vultures mean to seize thee,
And take away thy life, while he who bears
A father's name, at Delphi still remains.

Attend. You had not fared so ill, I am convinced,
If he were present, but now every friend
Deserts you.

Andro. Is there not a rumour spread
Of Peleus' coming?

Attend. He, though he were here,
Is grown too old to aid you.

Andro. More than once
I sent to him.

Attend. Suppose you that he heeds
None of your messengers?

Andro. What means this question?
Wilt thou accept such office?

Attend. What pretext
To colour my long absence from this house
Shall I allege?
Andro. Full many are the schemes
Which thou, who art a woman, can devise.
Attend. 'Twere dangerous; for Hermione is watchful.
Andro. Dost thou perceive the danger, and renounce
Thy friends in their distress?
Attend. Not thus: forbear
To brand me with so infamous a charge:
I go; for of small value is the life
(Whate'er befall me) of a female slave.
[*Exit* ATTENDANT.
Andro. Proceed: meanwhile I to the conscious air
Those plaints and bitter wailings will repeat,
On which I ever dwell. Unhappy women
Find comfort in perpetually talking
Of what they suffer. But my groans arise
Not from one ill, but many ills: the walls
Of my loved country razed, my Hector slain,
And that hard fortune, in whose yoke bound fast,
Thus am I fallen into th' unseemly state
Of servitude. We never ought to call
Frail mortals happy, at their latest hour
Till we behold them to the shades descend.

ELEGY.

In Helen sure, to Troy's imperial towers
Young Paris wafted no engaging bride,
But when he led her to those nuptial bowers,
Some fiend infernal crossed the billowy tide.

With brandished javelin and devouring flame,
For her the Grecian warriors to thy shore,
O Ilion, in a thousand vessels came,
And drenched thy smould'ring battlements with gore.

Around the walls, my Hector, once thy boast,
Fixed to his car, was by Achilles borne,
And from my chamber hurried to the coast
I veiled my head in servitude forlorn.

Much wept these streaming eyes, when in the dust
My city, palace, husband, prostrate lay.
Subject to fierce Hermione's disgust,
Why should I still behold the hated day?

Harassed with insults from that haughty dame,
Round Thetis' bust my suppliant arms I fling,
And here with gushing tears bewail my shame,
As from the rock burst forth the living spring.

CHORUS, ANDROMACHE

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O thou, who seated in this holy space,
Hast Thetis' temple thy asylum made,
Though Phthia gave me birth, to aid
Thee, hapless dame of Asiatic race,
I hither come; would I from direful harms
Could guard, could heal the strife
'Twixt thee and that indignant wife
Hermione, whom ruthless discord arms
To punish thee the rival of her charms,
A captive, to the genial bed,
Who by Achilles' son wert led.

I. 2.

Aware of fate, th' impending evil weigh.
A helpless Phrygian nymph, thou striv'st in vain
'Gainst her of Sparta's proud domain:
Cease to this sea-born goddess, cease to pray,
And at her blazing shrine no longer stay:
For how can it avail
To thee with hopeless sorrow pale
To suffer all thy beauties to decay,
Because thy rulers with oppression sway?
Thou to superior might must bend.
Why, feeble as thou art, contend?

II. 1.

Yet hasten from the Nereid's lofty seat,
Consider that thou tread'st a foreign plain,
And that these hostile walls detain
In strictest bondage thy reluctant feet,
Here none of all those friends, that numerous band,
Who shared thy greatness, is at hand,
To cheer thee in these days of shame,
O wretched, wretched dame.

II. 2.

A miserable matron thou art come
From Troy to our abodes, unwilling guest;
Though mine the sympathizing breast.
Yet I through reverence to our lords am dumb,
Lest she, who springs from Helen, child of Jove,
Should be a witness of that love
Which I to thee whose griefs I share,
Impelled by pity bear.

HERMIONE, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

Herm. The gorgeous ornaments of gold, these brows
Encircling, and the tissued robes I wear,
I from Achilles', or from Peleus' stores,
As chosen presents when I hither came,
Received not, but from Sparta's realm, these gifts
My father Menelaus hath bestowed
With a large dower, that I might freely speak.
Such is the answer which to you I make,
O Phthian dames. But thou, who art a slave
And captive, wouldst in these abodes usurp
Dominion, and expel me; to my lord
Thy drugs have made me odious, hence ensues
My barrenness: the Asiatic dames,
For these abhorred devices are renowned;
But thee will I subdue, nor shall this dome
of the immortal Nereid, nor her altar
Or temple save thee from impending death;
If either man or god should be disposed
To rescue thee, 'twere fit that to atone
For the proud thoughts thou in thy happier days

Didst nourish, thou shouldst tremble, at my knees
Fall low, and sweep the pavement of my house,
Sprinkling the waters from a golden urn.
Know where thou art: no Hector governs here,
No Phrygian Priam doth this sceptre wield;
This is no Chrysa, but a Grecian city.
Yet thou, O wretched woman, art arrived
At such a pitch of madness, that thou dar'st
To sleep e'en with the son of him who slew
Thy husband, and a brood of children bear
To him whose hands yet reek with Phrygian gore,
Such is the whole abhorred barbarian race;
The father with his daughter, the vile son
With his own mother, with her brother too
The sister, sins, friends by their dearest friends
Are murdered; deeds like these no wholesome law
Prohibits: introduce not among us
Such crimes, for 'tis unseemly that one man
Possess two women; the fond youth who seeks
Domestic harmony, confines his love
To one fair partner of the genial bed.

Chorus. The female sex are envious, and pursue
With an incessant hatred those who share
Their nuptial joys.

Andro. Alas! impetuous youth
Proves baleful to mankind, and there are none
Who act with justice in their blooming years.
But what I dread is this, lest slavery curb
My tongue, though I have many truths to utter:
In this dispute with you, if I prevail,
That very triumph may become my bane:
For those of haughty spirits ill endure
The most prevailing arguments when urged
By their inferiors. Yet my better cause
I will not thus betray. Say, youthful princess,
What reasons of irrefragable force
Enable me to drive you from the couch
Of your own lawful husband? to the Phrygians
Is Sparta grown inferior, and hath fortune
On us conferred the palm? Do you behold me
Still free? elate with youth, a vigorous frame,
The wide extent of empire I possess,

And number of my friends, am I desirous
To occupy these mansions in your stead,
That in your stead I might bring forth a race
Of slaves, th' appendages of my distress?
Will any one endure (if you produce
No children) that my sons should be the kings
Of Phthia?—the Greeks love me for the sake
Of Hector, I too was forsooth obscure,
And not a queen, in Troy. Your husband's hate,
Not from my drugs, but from your soul, unsuited
For social converse, springs: there is a philtre
To gain his love. Not beauty, but the virtues,
O woman, to the partners of our bed
Afford delight. But if it sting your pride
That Sparta's a vast city, while you treat
Scyros with scorn, amidst the poor, display
Your riches, and of Menelaus speak
As greater than Achilles; hence your lord
Abhors you. For a woman, though bestowed
On a vile mate, should learn to yield, nor strive
For the pre-eminence. In Thrace o'erspread
With snow, if you were wedded to a king,
Who to his bed takes many various dames,
Would you have slain them? you would cast disgrace
On your whole sex by such unsated lust;
Base were the deed: for though our souls are warmed
With more intense desires than those of men
We modestly conceal them. For thy sake
I, O my dearest Hector, loved the objects
Of thy affections, whene'er Venus' wiles
Caused thee to err, and at my breast full oft
Nourished thy spurious children, that in nought
Thy joys I might embitter: acting thus
I won him by my virtues. But you tremble
E'en if the drops of Heaven's transparent dew
Rest on your husband. Strive not to transcend
Your mother in a wild excess of love,
O woman. For the children, if endued
With reason, such examples should avoid
Of those who bore them, as corrupt the soul.

Chorus. As far as possible, O queen, comply
With my advice, and in mild terms accost her.

Herm. What mean'st thou by this arrogance of speech,
This vain debate, as if thou still wert chaste,
And I had strayed from virtue's path?
Andro. The words
You have been using, now at least are void
Of modesty.
Herm. O woman, may this breast
Harbour no soul like thine.
Andro. Though bashful youth
Glow on your cheek, indecent is your language.
Herm. Thou by thy actions more than by thy words
Hast proved the malice which to me thou bear'st.
Andro. Why will you not conceal th' inglorious pangs
Of jealous love?
Herm. What woman but resents
Such wrongs, and deems them great?
Andro. The use some make
Of these misfortunes adds to their renown:
But shame waits those who are devoid of wisdom.
Herm. We dwell not in a city where prevail
Barbarian laws.
Andro. In Phrygia or in Greece
Base actions are with infamy attended.
Herm. Though most expert in every subtle art,
Yet die thou must.
Andro. Behold you Thetis' image
Turning its eyes on you?
Herm. She loathes thy country
Where her Achilles treacherously was slain.
Andro. Your mother Helen caused his death, not I.
Herm. Wouldst thou retrace still farther the sad tale
Of our misfortunes?
Andro. I restrain my tongue.
Herm. Speak to me now on that affair which caused
My coming hither.
Andro. All I say is this:
You have not so much wisdom as you need.
Herm. From this pure temple of the sea-born goddess
Wilt thou depart?
Andro. Not while I live: you first
Must slay, then drag me hence.
Herm. I am resolved

How to proceed, and wait my lord's return
No longer.

Andro. Nor will I before he come
Surrender up myself.

Herm. With flaming brands
Hence will I drive thee, and no deference pay
To thy entreaties.

Andro. Kindle them; the gods
Will view the deed.

Herm. The scourge too is prepared.

Andro. Transpierce this bosom, deluge with my gore
The altar of the goddess, you by her
Shall be at length o'ertaken.

Herm. From thy cradle,
Trained up and hardened in barbarian pride,
Canst thou endure to die? from this asylum
Soon will I rouse thee by thy own consent,
I with such baits am furnished, but conceal
My purpose, which th' event itself ere long
Will make conspicuous. Keep a steady seat,
For though by molten lead thou wert enclosed
Hence would I rouse thee, ere Achilles' son,
Whom thou confid'st in, to this land return.

[*Exit* HERMIONE.

Andro. In him I place my still unshaken trust.
Yet is it strange that the celestial powers,
To heal the serpent's venom, have assigned
Expedients, but no remedy devised
Against an evil woman who surpasses
Or vipers' stings or the consuming flame:
Thus baleful is our influence on mankind.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

The winged son of Maia and of Jove
To many sorrowful events gave birth,
And scattered discord o'er the bleeding earth,
When he through sacred Ida's piny grove
Guided the car of three immortal dames,

(The golden prize of beauty to obtain,
In hateful strife engaged, who urged their claims);
To where in his mean hut abode a lonely swain.

I. 2.

No sooner had they reached the destined bower,
Than in the limpid spring her snowy frame
Each goddess laved; to Priam's son then came
With artful speeches of such winning power
As might beguile the rash and amorous boy:
Venus prevailed; her words, though sweet their sound,
Proved of destructive consequence to Troy,
Whose stately bulwarks hence lie levelled with the ground.

II. 1.

When new-born Paris first beheld the light,
Would that his mother, o'er her head, this brand
Ordained by Heaven to fire his native land,
Had cast, before he dwelt on Ida's height.
Unheeded from the bay's prophetic shade
Exclaimed Cassandra: "Let the child be slain;
Kill him, or Priam's empire is betrayed."
Frantic she raved and sued to every prince in vain.

II. 2.

Deaf was each prince, or Ilion ne'er had felt
The servile yoke, nor hadst thou, hapless fair,
Beneath these roofs, encompassed by despair,
And subject to a rigid master, dwelt.
O had he died, the fated toil of Greece,
That stubborn war through ten revolving years,
Had roused no heroes from the lap of peace,
Nor caused the widow's shrieks, the hoary father's tears.

Menelaus, Molossus, Andromache, Chorus.

Mene. Your son I hither bring, whom from this fane
With secrecy, you to another house,
Without my daughter's knowledge, had removed.
You boasted that this image of the goddess
To you, and those who hid him, would afford

A sure asylum: but your deep-laid craft,
O woman, cannot baffle Menelaus.
If you depart not hence, he in your stead
Shall be the victim; therefore well revolve
Th' important question; had you rather die,
Or, with his streaming gore, let him atone
The foul offence 'gainst me and 'gainst my daughter
By you committed?

Andro. Thou, O vain opinion,
Hast with renown puffed up full many men
Who were of no account. I deem those blest
On whom with truth such honour is bestowed:
But them who by fallacious means obtain it
I hold unworthy of possessing fame,
When all their seeming wisdom but arises
From Fortune's gifts. Thou with the bravest chiefs
Of Greece, from Priam erst didst wrest his Troy;
E'en thou who art so mean as to inspire
Thy daughter with resentment 'gainst a child,
And strive with me a miserable captive:
Unworthy of thy conquest over Troy
Thee do I hold, and Troy yet more disgraced
By such a victor. Some indeed there are
To all appearance upright, who awhile
Outwardly glitter, though they in their hearts
Are on a level with the worthless bulk
Of mortals, and superior but in wealth
Whose power is great. This conference let us end
O Menelaus, be it now supposed
I by thy daughter am already slain:
'Twill be impossible for her to 'scape
From the pollution ruthless murder brings;
Thou too by many tongues wilt be accused
Of this vile deed, with her will they confound
Thee the abettor. But if I preserve
My life, are ye resolved to slay my son?
How will the father tamely bear the death
Of his loved offspring? he was not esteemed
At Troy so void of courage. He is gone
Whither his duty calls. Soon will the chief
Act worthy of the race from which he springs,
The hoary Peleus, and his dauntless sire

Achilles, he from these abodes will cast
Thy daughter forth, and when thou to another
In marriage giv'st her, what hast thou to say
On her behalf? "That from a worthless lord
Her wisdom drove her?" This would be a falsehood
Too gross. But who would wed her? till grown grey
In widowhood, shall she beneath thy roofs
Fix her loathed residence? O wretched man,
The rising conflux of unnumbered woes
Behold'st thou not? hadst thou not rather find
Thy daughter wronged by concubines, than suffering
Th' indignities I speak of? we from trifles
Such grievous mischiefs ought not to create;
Nor if we women are a deadly bane,
To the degenerate nature of our sex
Should men conform. If I pernicious drugs
Have to thy daughter ministered, and been,
As she pretends, the cause of her abortion,
Immediately will I without reluctance,
And without grovelling at this altar's base,
To any rigid punishment submit
Inflicted by thy son-in-law, from whom
I surely merit as severe revenge
For having made him childless. Such am I:
But in thy temper I perceive one cause
Of just alarm, since in that luckless strife
About a woman, and a vile one too,
Thou the famed Phrygian city didst destroy.

Chorus. Too freely hast thou spoken, in a tone
Which ill becomes thy sex, and that high soul
The bounds of wisdom hath o'erleaped.

Mene. O woman,
So small an object, as you rightly judge,
Deserves not the attention of my realm,
Nor that of Greece. But learn this obvious truth:
To any man whate'er he greatly needs,
Is of more worth by far than taking Troy.
My daughter I assist, because I deem it
A wrong of great importance should she lose
Her bridal rights: for every woman looks
On all beside as secondary ills:
But if she from her husband's arms be torn.

Seems reft of life itself. That Phthia's prince
Direct my servants, and that his obey
Me and my race, is fitting: for true friends
Have no distinct possessions, but hold all
In common. While I wait for the return
Of her long absent lord, should I neglect
My daughter's interests, I were weak, not wise.
But leave this shrine of Thetis: for the child
Shall if you bleed escape th' impending doom:
Him, if you die not, will I slay, since fate
Of you or him the forfeit life demands.

Andro. Ah me! a bitter and unwelcome choice
Of life on terms like these hast thou proposed;
Wretch that I am! for whether I decline
Or make such option, I am wretched still.
O thou, who by a trifling wrong provoked,
Committ'st great crimes, attend: for what offence
Wouldst thou bereave me of my life? what city
Have I betrayed? what child of thine destroyed?
What mansion fired? I to my master's bed
By force was dragged: yet me alone, not him
The author of that crime, thou mean'st to slay.
Thou, the first cause o'erlooking, on th' effect
Which it produces, vent'st thy rage. What woes
Encompass wretched me! alas! my country!
How dreadful are the wrongs which I endure!
But wherefore was I doomed to bear a child,
And to the burden under which I groan
Add a new burden? what delight can life
To me afford? or on what fortunes past
Or present should I turn these eyes which saw
The corse of Hector by the victor's car
Whirled round the walls, and wretched Troy a heap
Of blazing ruins? I meantime a slave
By my dishevelled hair was dragged aboard
The Argive navy; when I reached the coast
Of Phthia, and cohabited with those
Who slew my Hector; (but why lavish plaints
On past calamities, without deploring
Or taking a due estimate of those
Which now impend?) I had this only son
My life's last comfort left, and they who take

Delight in deeds of cruelty, would slay him;
Yet to preserve my miserable life
He shall not perish; for auspicious hopes,
Could he be saved, his future days attend:
But if I died not for my son, reproach
Would be my portion. Lo! I leave the altar
And now am in thy hands, stab, slay me, bind,
Strain hard the deadly noose. My son, thy mother
To rescue thee from an untimely grave,
Descends the shades beneath; if thou escape
The ruthless grasp of fate, remember me
How miserably I suffered; and with kisses,
At his return, when thou goest forth to meet
Thy father, when a flood of tears thou shedd'st,
And cling'st around him with those pliant arms,
Inform him how I acted. All men hold
Their children dear as life; but he who scorns them
Because he ne'er experienced what it is
To be a father, though with fewer griefs
Attended, but enjoys imperfect bliss.

[*Rises, and advances from the altar.*

Chorus. I with compassion to this moving tale
Have listened; for distress, to all mankind,
Though strangers, must seem piteous: but on thee,
O Menelaus, 'tis incumbent now
To reconcile thy daughter, and this captive,
That she may from her sorrows be released.

Mene. Seize her, and bind her hands; for she shall hear
No pleasing language: I proposed to slay
Your son, that you might leave that hallowed altar
Of Thetis, and thus craftily induced you
To fall into my hands, and meet your death;
Be well assured, such is the present state
Of your affairs: as for that boy, on him
My daughter shall pass judgment, or to kill,
Or spare him: but now enter these abodes,
That you may learn, slave as you are, to treat
Those who are free no longer with disdain.

Andro. Thou hast o'erreached me by thy treacherous arts;
Alas! I am betrayed.

Mene. Proclaim these tidings
To all men; for I shall not contradict them.

Andro. By those who dwell beside Eurotas' stream
Are such base frauds called wisdom?
Mene. Both at Troy
And there, 'tis just the injured should retaliate.
Andro. Believ'st thou that the gods are gods no longer,
Nor wield the bolt of vengeance?
Mene. We must look
To that: but you shall die.
Andro. And wilt thou seize
This unfledged bird, to slay him?
Mene. No, I will not,
But give him to my daughter, who must act
As she thinks fit.
Andro. Then how, alas, my son!
Can I sufficiently bewail thy fate?
Mene. "Him," 'twas but now with arrogance you said,
"Auspicious hopes attend."
Andro. Ye worst of foes
To all mankind, inhabitants of Sparta!
Expert in treacherous counsels, still devising
New falsehoods, curst artificers of mischief,
Your paths are crooked, yet though void of worth,
Through Greece by circumspection ye uphold
An undeserved pre-eminence. What crimes,
What murders, what a thirst for abject gain
Characterize your realm! with specious tongue
Uttering a language foreign to your heart,
Are ye not ever caught? Perdition seize you!
Death is less grievous than thou deem'st to me
Who date my utter ruin from that hour
When Ilion's wretched city was involved
In the same fate with my illustrious lord,
Whose spear oft drove thee trembling from the field
Into thy ships: but now against his wife
A formidable warrior art thou come
To murder me: strike, for this coward tongue
Shall never leave thine and thy daughter's shame
Unpublished. If in Sparta thou art great,
So was I erst in Ilion; but exult not
In my disasters, for on thee ere long
The same reverse of fortune may attend.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Two rival consorts ne'er can I approve,
Or sons, the source of strife, their birth who owe
To different mothers; hence connubial love
Is banished, and the mansion teems with woe.
One blooming nymph let cautious husbands wed,
And share with her alone an unpolluted bed.

I. 2.

No prudent city, no well-governed state,
More than a single potentate will own;
Their subjects droop beneath the grievous weight
When two bear rule, and discord shakes the throne;
And if two bards awake their sounding lyres
E'en the harmonious Muse a cruel strife inspires,

II. 1.

To aid the bark, when prosperous gales arise,
Two jarring pilots shall misguide the helm:
Weak is a multitude when all are wise,
One simpler monarch could have saved the realm.
Let a sole chief the house or empire sway,
And all who hope for bliss their lord's behests obey.

II. 2.

This truth hath Menelaus' daughter shown,
Furious she comes the victim to destroy;
And, that their blood may nuptial wrongs atone,
The Phrygian captive, and that hapless boy,
With impious rage unjust would cause to bleed;
May pity, awful queen, thy lifted arm impede!

But I before these doors behold the pair
On whom the fatal sentence now is passed.
Thou wretched dame, and wretched child who diest
Because thy mother to a foreign bed
By force was dragged, in her imputed guilt
Thou wert not an accomplice, thou thy lords
Hast not offended.

Andro. To the realms beneath,
Lo, I am hurried, with these bloody hands
Fast bound in galling chains.
Moloss. I too, O mother,
Under thy wing, to those loathed shades descend
A victim. O ye lords of Phthia's land,
And thou, my father, succour those thou lov'st.
Andro. Cling to thy mother's bosom, O my child,
Together let us die.
Moloss. Ah me! how grievous
My sufferings are! too clearly I perceive
That I, and thou my mother, both are wretched.
Mene. Go both together to th' infernal realm:
For ye from hostile turrets hither came.
Although the cause why you and he must bleed
Is not the same, my sentence takes away
Your life, and my Hermione's your son's.
The highest folly were it to permit
A foe to live and vex us, whom with ease
We might despatch, and from our house remove
Such danger.
Andro. O my husband, would to Heaven
I had thy arm to aid me; and thy spear,
Thou son of Priam.
Moloss. Wretched me! what charm
Can I devise t' avert impending fate?
Andro. My son, implore the mercy of our lord
Clasping his knees.
Moloss. Dear monarch, spare my life.
Andro. Tears from these eyes burst forth like trickling drops
By the sun's heat forced from a solid rock,
Wretch that I am!
Moloss. What remedy, alas!
For these dire evils can my soul devise?
Mene. Why dost thou idly grovel at my feet
With fruitless supplications, while I stand
Firm as a rock, or as th' unpitying wave?
Such conduct serves my interests: no affection
To thee I bear, because my morn of life
Was wasted in the conflict, ere I took
Troy and thy mother, whose society
Thou in the realms of Pluto shalt enjoy.

PELEUS, MENELAUS, ANDROMACHE, MOLOSSUS, CHORUS.

Chorus. Peleus, I see, draws near, his aged feet
With eager haste advancing.

Peleus. You, and him
Who stands presiding o'er a murderous deed,
What means this uproar that disturbs the house,
I question, and what practices are these
Ye carry on unauthorized by law?
O Menelaus, stay thy furious hand,
And let not execution thus outstrip
All righteous judgment. O my friends, lead on;
For such a dread emergency appears
T' admit of no delay. Could I regain
That youthful vigour which I erst enjoyed
As prosperous breezes aid the floating sails,
This captive would I favour. Say, what right
Have they to bind your hands, and drag along
You and your son? for like the bleating mother,
Led forth to slaughter with her lamb, you perish,
While I and your unwitting lord are absent.

Andro. They, as thou seest, O venerable man,
Me and my son thus bear to instant death.
What shall I say to thee, whom I with speed
Not by one single messenger but thousands
Have sent for? sure thou, of the fatal strife
In these divided mansions, with his daughter,
To which I owe my ruin, must have heard:
And from the violated shrine of Thetis,
Who bore to thee a noble son, the goddess
Whom thou rever'st e'en now with brutal force
Me have they torn, nor judged my cause, nor wait
For absent Neoptolemus, but, knowing
That I and that this child who hath committed
No fault, are left alone and unprotected,
Would slay us both. But, O thou aged man,
Thus prostrate on my knees, to thee I sue,
And, though this hand must not presume to touch
Thy honoured beard, conjure thee by the gods,
Rescue us, or to thy eternal shame
Both he and I must miserably bleed.

Peleus. My orders are that you those galling chains

Unbind and loose her hands, else will I make
The disobedient weep.

Mene. But I, your equal,
Who have much more authority o'er her,
Forbid them.

Peleus. Com'st thou hither to direct
My household? is it not enough for thee
To rule thy Spartans?

Mene. Her I took at Troy.

Peleus. She, to reward his valour, was bestowed
Upon my grandson.

Mene. Doth not all he owns,
To me, and what is mine, to him belong?

Peleus. For honest purposes, but not for crimes
And murderous violence.

Mene. You ne'er shall take her
Out of my hands.

Peleus. Thy head I with this sceptre
Will smite.

Mene. Draw near; if you presume to touch me,
Soon shall you rue such outrage.

Peleus. O thou villain,
Sprung from a race of impious sires, what right
To be accounted an illustrious man,
And numbered with the truly brave, hast thou,
Who by a Phrygian wanderer wert deprived
Of thy fair consort, after thou hadst left
Thy house unbarred and destitute of guards,
As if thou in thy mansions hadst possessed
A virtuous dame, though she of all her sex
Was the most dissolute? nor if she would
Can any Spartan nymph be chaste? for wandering
From their own homes, distinguished by bare legs,
And zoneless vest, they with young men contend
In swiftness and in wrestling; I such customs
Hold in abhorrence. Is there any room
For wonder if the women prove unchaste
Whom thus you educate? thy Helen ought
To have proposed these questions, ere she left
Her native realm, regardless of thy love,
And by that youthful paramour seduced,
Wantonly fled into a foreign land.

Yet for her sake didst thou that numerous host
Of Greeks collect, and lead them to assail
The Phrygian ramparts. Thou that beauteous dame
Shouldst rather have despised, nor in her cause
Wielded the javelin, when thou found'st her worthless,
But suffered her in Ilion to remain,
And sent rich gifts to Paris on these terms,
That to thy house she never should return.
But thou, instead of suffering these just motives
To make their due impression on thy soul,
Full many valiant warriors hast destroyed,
Made th' aged matron childless, and deprived
Of his illustrious sons the hoary sire.
Numbered with those who owe to thee thy ruin
Am wretched I: for like some evil genius
In thee do these indignant eyes behold
The murderer of Achilles: thou alone,
Save by the missile shaft, unwounded cam'st
From Ilion's hostile shores; in burnished chests
Didst thou bear thither the same glittering arms
Which thou bear'st back again. Before he wedded,
I warned my grandson to form no connection
With thee, nor into these abodes admit
The brood of that adult'ress; for the daughters
Their mother emulate in deeds of shame.
Look well to this, ye suitors, and select
The damsel with maternal worth endued.
Then with what scorn didst thou thy brother treat,
Commanding him 'gainst reason to transgress,
And sacrifice his daughter. Thou such fears,
Lest thou that execrable wife shouldst lose,
Didst entertain. When thou hadst taken Troy,
This too I urge against thee, though thou hadst
Thy consort in thy power, thou didst not slay her,
But when her throbbing bosom thou beheld'st
Didst cast away thy sword, receive her kisses,
And soothe the fears of her who had betrayed thee.
O worthless miscreant, whom the Cyprian Queen
Hath thus debased! thou after this intrud'st
Into my grandson's palace, in his absence
Committ'st these outrages, and basely slay'st
A miserable woman, and her child,

Thee and thy daughter who shall cause to weep
Though trebly illegitimate his birth.
Oft the parched heath, when duly tilled, exceeds
The richest soil, and greater instances
Of virtue are in many a bastard found
Than in the lawfully begotten race.
But take thy daughter hence. Far better is it
To form affinity and strictest friendship
With a poor man of worth, than him who joins
Iniquity with wealth; but as for thee,
Thou art a thing of nought.

Chorus. Among mankind,
Oft from a small beginning doth the tongue
Great strife occasion: but the wise beware
Of entering on a contest with their friend.

Mene. Why do we speak in such exalted terms
Of aged men, as if they were endued
With wisdom, though in former days supposed
By the whole Grecian race to judge aright?
When you, O Peleus, who derive your birth
From an illustrious sire, and with my house
So nearly are connected, hold a language
Disgraceful to yourself, and slander me,
For a barbarian dame, whom from this land
You ought to banish far beyond the Nile,
Beyond the Phasis, and applaud my vengeance;
Because she comes from Asiatic shores,
Where many valiant Grecian chiefs lie slain.
And hath in part been guilty of the blood
Of your famed son; for Paris, by whose shaft,
Transpierced, Achilles perished, was the brother,
And she the wife of Hector: yet you enter
The same abode with her, the genial board
With her partake, allow her to bring forth
Under your roofs an execrable brood.
These mischiefs both to you and me, old man,
Foreseeing, have I snatched her from your hands
With a design to kill her. But, O say,
(For there is nought of meanness in our holding
This conference), if my daughter bear no child,
And she have sons, will you appoint them lords
Of this your Phthian land? shall they who spring

From a barbarian race, o'er Greeks bear rule?
Am I, because I hate injustice, void
Of understanding, and are you discreet?
Reflect on this; had you bestowed your daughter
On any citizen, were she thus treated,
Would you sit down and bear her wrongs in silence?
I deem you would not. Why then with such harshness
Speak you in favour of a foreign dame
Against your nearest friends? as great a right
To vengeance as her husband, hath the wife
Whom her lord injures: for while he whose doors
An unchaste consort enters, in his hands
Hath power to right himself, a woman's strength
Lies only in her parents and her friends.
My daughter, therefore, am I bound to aid:
You show the marks of age: for while you talk
Of that famed war I waged, you more befriend me
Than if you had been silent. Deep in woe
Was Helen plunged, not by her own consent
But by the gods: and this event hath proved
To Greece most advantageous, for its sons
Who knew not how till then to wield the spear,
Grew valiant. From experience, best of tutors,
Men gather all the knowledge they possess.
But when I saw my consort, in forbearing
To take away her life, I acted wisely:
And would that you had done like me, nor slain
Your brother Phocus; this to you I speak
Through mere benevolence, and not in wrath:
But if resentment o'er your soul usurp
An empire, such intemperance of the tongue
Will be in you more shameful, while my wishes
I by a prudent forethought shall attain.

Chorus. Now both desist (for this were better far)
From such unprofitable strife of words,
O ye will both offend.

Peleus. Ah me! through Greece
What mischievous opinions have prevailed!
When with the spoils of vanquished foes, the host
A trophy rear, they think not how 'twas gained
By those brave soldiers who endure the toil
Of battle, while their general bears away

All the renown: though he was only one
Who stood 'midst thousands brandishing his spear,
Nor any single combatant surpassed,
He gains a larger portion of applause.
The venerable rulers of a city,
Placed in exalted stations, yet devoid
Of any real merit, overlook
The populace, though many in the crowd
Of their inferiors are more wise than they,
If haply courage and an honest zeal
Unite to place them in the public view.
Thou and thy brother thus are swollen with pride,
From having led those troops to conquer Troy,
And triumph in the sufferings of your friends.
But henceforth will I teach thee not to look
On Paris, Ida's shepherd, as a foe,
More terrible than Peleus. If with speed
Thou quit not these abodes, and take away
Thy childless daughter, my indignant grandson,
By her dishevelled hair around the palace
Will drag this barren dame, who stung with envy,
Cannot endure the fruitful mother's joys.
But, if she prove so luckless as to bare
No issue, ought she therefore to deprive us
Of our posterity? Begone, ye slaves,
That I may see who dares obstruct my loosing
Her hands. Rise up: though trembling with old age,
Your chains can I unbind. O worthless man,
Hast thou thus galled her hands? didst thou suppose
Thou held'st a bull or lion in the snare?
Or didst thou shudder lest she should snatch up
A sword, and wreak just vengeance on thy head?
Come hither to these sheltering arms, my child,
Unbind thy mother's chains; in Phthia, thee
I'll educate, to them a bitter foe.
Should Sparta's sons by the protended spear
Obtain no fame, nor in th' embattled field
Their prowess signalize, be well assured
Ye have no other merit.

Chorus. Old men talk
With freedom, and their vehemence of soul
Is hard to be restrained.

Mene. Extremely prone
Are you to slander; much against my will
I came to Phthia, and am here resolved
That I will neither do nor suffer aught
Disgraceful: but to my own home with speed
Am I returning, and have little time
In vain debates to lavish: for a city
Not far from Sparta's gates and erst a friend
Is waging war against us: I would lead
My hardy squadrons forth t' assail the foe,
And utterly subdue them. To my wish
Soon as this great affair I shall have settled,
Hither will I return, and face to face,
When I my reasons to my son-in-law
Have in the clearest terms proposed, will hear
What he can urge; and if he punish her,
And for the future courteously to me
Demean himself, from me he in return
Shall meet with courtesy; but if he rage,
He of my rage the dire effects shall feel:
For still such treatment as his deeds deserve
Shall he experience. But I am not hurt
By these injurious words of yours; for like
Some disembodied ghost, you have a voice,
Although you are not able to do aught
But merely speak. [*Exit* MENELAUS.

Peleus. Lead on, my boy; here take
Thy station under these protecting arms;
And thou too, O thou miserable dame,
Driven hither by the furious storm; at length
Into a quiet haven are ye come.

Andro. On thee and thy descendants may the gods
Shower every blessing, venerable man,
For having saved this child, and wretched me;
Yet O beware, lest in some lonely spot
They suddenly assail us, and by force
Drag me away, perceiving thou art old,
That I am a weak woman, and my son
Is but an infant: all precautions use,
Else we, who have escaped them, may again
Be caught.

Peleus. Forbear to utter, in such language

As this, the dictates of a woman's fear.
Advance, who dares to touch you? he shall weep.
For with the blessing of th' immortal gods,
And by unnumbered troops of valiant horse,
And infantry supported, I bear rule
Over the Phthian land. I am robust,
Nor, as you deem, impaired by palsied age.
Were I, opposed in battle, but to look
On such a man as this, old as I am,
An easy conquest soon should I obtain.
Superior is the veteran, if with courage
Inspired, to many youths: for what avails
A vigorous body with a coward's heart?

[*Exeunt* PELEUS, ANDROMACHE, *and* MOLOSSUS.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

My wish were this; or never to be born,
Or to descend from generous sires, and share
The blessings which attend a wealthy heir.
If heaviest woes assail, ne'er left forlorn
Without a friend are they of nobler race,
Hereditary trophies deck their head:
The records of the brave with joy we trace,
No distant age their memory can efface,
For virtue's torch unquenched pours radiance o'er the dead.

II.

Better is conquest, when we gain our right
By no reproachful means, no deeds of shame,
Than if to envy we expose our fame,
And trample on the laws with impious might.
Such laurels which at first too sweetly bloom,
Ere long are withered by the frost of time,
And scorn pursues their wearers to the tomb.
I in my household or the state presume
To seek that power alone which rules without a crime.

III.

O veteran, sprung from Æacus, thy spear
Chilled the Lapithæ with fear,
And from their hills the Centaurs drove.
When glory called, and prosperous gales
Swelled the Argo's daring sails,
Intrepid didst thou pass that strait
Where ruin oft the crashing bark attends,
And ocean's foam descends
From the Symplegades' obstructing height.
Next didst thou land on perjured Ilion's shore,
With Hercules illustrious son of Jove,
Then first its bulwarks streamed with gore:
Till crowned with fame a partner of his toil,
Europe again thou sought'st and Phthia's frozen soil.

THE NURSE OF HERMIONE, CHORUS.

Nurse. How doth a rapid series of events
The most disastrous, O my dearest friends,
This day invade us! for within these doors
Hermione my mistress, by her sire
Forsaken, and grown conscious of the guilt
She hath incurred, by that attempt to murder
Andromache and her unhappy son,
Resolves to die, because she dreads, lest fired
With indignation at her guilt, her lord
Should cast her forth with scorn, or take away
Her life, because she purposed to have slain
The innocent. The servants who attend
Can hardly by their vigilance prevent her
From fixing round her neck the deadly noose,
Or snatch the dagger from her hand, so great
Is her affliction, and she now confesses
That she has done amiss. My strength's exhausted
In striving to withhold my royal mistress
From perishing by an ignoble death.
But enter ye these mansions, and attempt
To save her life, for strangers can persuade
Far better than old friends.

Chorus. We hear the voice
Of her attendants from within confirm

Th' intelligence thou hither cam'st to bring:
That hapless woman seems just on the point
Of showing with what rage she by her guilt
Is hurried on: for lo, she rushes forth
From yon abodes, already hath she 'scaped
Her servants' hands, and is resolved to die.

HERMIONE, NURSE, CHORUS.

Herm. Ah me! these ringlets how will I tear off,
How rend my cheeks!
Nurse. What mean'st thou, O my daughter?
Wilt thou thus injure that fair frame?
Herm. Away,
O thou slight veil, I pluck thee from my head,
And toss thy scattered fragments in the air.
Nurse. Cover thy bosom with the decent robe.
Herm. Why with a robe my bosom should I hide?
The crimes I have committed 'gainst my lord
Are clear, well known, and cannot be concealed.
Nurse. Griev'st thou because thou hast formed schemes to slay
Thy rival?
Herm. I with many groans bewail
Those hostile darings, execrable wretch,
Wretch that I am, an object of just hate
To all mankind.
Nurse. Thy husband such offence
Will pardon.
Herm. From my hand why didst thou snatch
The sword? Restore, restore it, O my friends,
That I this bosom may transpierce. Why force me
To quit yon pendant noose?
Nurse. In thy distraction
Shall I forsake and leave thee thus to die?
Herm. Where shall I find (inform me, O ye Fates)
The blazing pyre, ascend the craggy rock,
Plunge in the billows, or amidst the woods
On a steep mountain waste the life I loathe,
That after death the gods beneath may take me
To their protection?
Chorus. Why wouldst thou make efforts

So violent? some mischiefs sent by Heaven
Sooner or later visit all mankind.

Herm. Me like a stranded bark, thou, O my sire,
Hast left forsaken and without an oar.
To thee I owe my ruin. I no longer
In these my bridal mansions can reside.
To the propitious statues of what God
With suppliant haste shall I repair, or fall
At a slave's knees, myself an abject slave?
I from the land of Phthia, like a bird
Upborne on azure wings, would speed my flight,
Or imitate that ship whose dashing oars
'Twixt the Cyanean straits first urged their way.

Nurse. As little, O my daughter, can I praise
That vehemence which caused thee to transgress
Against the Trojan dame, as these thy fears
Which are immoderate. For such slight offence
Thy lord, misled by the pernicious tongue
Of a barbarian woman, from his couch
Will not expel thee: for thou art not his
By right of conquest, borne from vanquished Troy;
But thee, the daughter of a mighty king,
He with abundant dower, and from a city,
Most flourishing, received: nor will thy sire,
His child forsaking, as thou dread'st, permit thee
To be cast forth: but enter these abodes,
Nor show thyself without, lest some affront
Thou shouldst receive if haply thou art seen
Before these doors. [*Exit* NURSE.

Chorus. Behold a man, whose dress
Is of such different fashion that it speaks
The foreigner, comes swiftly from the gate.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, CHORUS.

Orestes. Is this th' abode of great Achilles' son,
The regal mansion, O ye foreign dames?

Chorus. It is as thou hast said. But who art thou
That ask'st this question?

Orestes. Agamemnon's son,
And Clytemnestra's; but my name's Orestes:
I to Dodona, th' oracle of Jove,

Am on my road; but since I now have reached
The land of Phthia, first would I inquire
How fares Hermione, the Spartan dame,
My kinswoman; doth she yet live and prosper?
For though from me far distant be the land
In which she now resides, she still is dear.
Herm. O son of Agamemnon, who thus make
Your seasonable appearance, like the haven
To mariners amidst a furious storm,
Take pity, I implore you by those knees,
On me a wretch whose inauspicious fortunes
You witness. Hence round your knees I fling
These arms, which ought to prove of equal force
With hallowed branches by the suppliant borne.
Orestes. What's this? am I deceived? or do my eyes
Indeed behold the queen of these abodes,
And Menelaus' daughter?
Herm. Th' only child
Whom to the Spartan monarch Helen bore.
Mistake me not.
Orestes. O Phœbus, healing power,
Protect us! But what dire mischance hath happened?
Or from the gods, or human foes, proceed
The evils thou endur'st?
Herm. Some from myself,
But others from the husband whom I wedded,
The rest from one of the immortal gods.
I utterly am ruined.
Orestes. What afflictions
Can any woman who's yet childless feel
But those which from her nuptial union spring?
Herm. Hence these distempers of the soul arise,
And well do you anticipate my words.
Orestes. Enamoured with another, is thy lord
False to thy bed?
Herm. He loves a captive dame,
The wife of Hector.
Orestes. This of which thou speak'st
Is a great evil, when one man possesses
Two wives.
Herm. 'Twas thus, till I avenged the wrong.

Orestes. Didst thou with arts familiar to thy sex
Plot 'gainst thy rival's life?
Herm. I would have killed
Her and her spurious son.
Orestes. Hast thou despatched them?
Or were they screened from their impending fate?
Herm. Old Peleus to these worthless objects showed
Too great a reverence.
Orestes. Was there any friend
Ready to aid thee in the purposed slaughter?
Herm. My sire, who from this cause for Sparta came.
Orestes. Yet by that aged man was he subdued?
Herm. Abashed he fled, and left me here alone.
Orestes. I understand thee well: thy husband's wrath
Thou fear'st for what thou'st done.
Herm. The fact you know:
Hence justly will he take away my life.
What can be said? yet by immortal Jove,
Our grandsire, I conjure you, send me far
From these domains, or to my father's house.
Had but these walls a voice, they would proclaim
The sentence of my exile, for the land
Of Phthia hates me. If my lord return
From Phœbus' oracle, for the misdeeds
I have committed, he will strike me dead,
Or force me to become that harlot's slave
Whom erst I ruled.
Orestes. By some will it be asked
Whence then into such errors didst thou fall?
Herm. My ruin I derive from the admission
Of these vile women, who inflamed my pride
By uttering these rash words: "Wilt thou endure
Beneath thy roof that odious slave who shares
Thy bridal couch? by Juno, awful queen,
I would not suffer such a wretch to breathe
In my polluted chamber." When I heard
The language uttered by these crafty sirens,
Artificers of mischief, who, to suit
Their purpose, in persuasive strains displayed
The power of eloquence, I was puffed up
With folly: for what need had I to hold
My lord in reverence while possessed of all

That I could wish? abundant wealth was mine,
O'er these abodes I reigned, and any children
I to my husband might hereafter bare
Would be legitimate; but hers, by mine
In strict subjection held, a spurious race.
But never, never (I this truth repeat)
Should wedded men, who have the gift of reason,
Let women have a free access, and visit
Their consort. For they teach her evil lessons:
Urged by the hopes of lucre, one corrupts
Her chastity; a second hath already
Transgressed herself, and wishes that her friend
May be as vicious: many by their lust
Are led astray: hence to their husband's house
A train of mischief rises. Guard the doors
Of your abodes with locks and massive bars;
Since from the intrusion of these female guests,
No good, but mischiefs numberless ensue.

Chorus. Thou to thy tongue hast given too free a scope
In thus aspersing the whole female race:
Thy present woes indeed our pardon claim;
Yet every woman is in duty bound
To gloss o'er the misconduct of her sex.

Orestes. Wisdom pertained to him who taught mankind
To hear the reasons by both parties urged
In a debate. Aware of the confusion
In these abodes, and of the strife 'twixt thee
And Hector's wife, I stayed not to observe
Whether thou in this house wouldst still remain,
Or through a fear of yonder captive dame
Abandon it: I therefore hither came,
Nor waited for intelligence from thee.
And if a satisfactory account
Of thy proceedings thou to me canst give,
I will convey thee hence. For thou, who erst
Wert mine, with this thy present husband liv'st,
Through the perfidious conduct of thy sire,
Who ere he entered the domains of Troy
Affianced thee to me, and then to him
Who now possesses thee, again engaged,
If he the Phrygian city should subdue.
But I forgive thy father for this wrong,

When hither great Achilles' son returned,
And to the bridegroom sued that he would loose
Thy plighted hand; of all my various fortunes
Informing him, and of my present woes;
How feasible it were for me to wed
Among my friends, but that for such an exile
As I am, driven from my paternal throne,
'Twould not be easy to obtain a consort
In any foreign land: on this he grew
More arrogant, and bitterly reproached me
Both with my mother's murder, and those Furies
Whose blood-stained visages inspire dismay.
By the misfortunes of my house bowed down
To earth, I grieved indeed, but grieving bore
The weight of these calamities, and reft
Of thee my bride, reluctantly departed.
But since thy fortunes now have undergone
A change so unexpected, and involved
In woe, thou stand'st aghast; from these abodes
Thee will I take and to thy sire convey,
For wondrous is the force of kindred ties;
And in misfortunes nought exceeds the friend
Who from the self-same house derives his birth.

Herm. My father will take care how to dispose
Of me in marriage, nor is it my province
Such question to decide. But, O convey me
From these loathed mansions with the utmost speed,
Lest when my husband at his first return
Enters the doors, he intercept my flight;
Or, hearing that I leave his grandson's house,
Peleus pursue me with his rapid steeds.

Orestes. Be of good cheer against that aged man,
And from thy furious lord, Achilles' son,
Who treated me with scorn, fear nought; this hand
Hath with such cautious artifice prepared
For him th' inevitable snares of death,
Of which no previous mention will I make:
But when it is accomplished, this exploit
Shall on the rock of Delphi be proclaimed.
I who my mother slew, if th' armed friends
Whom I have stationed in the Pythian realm

Observe their oaths, will teach him that he ought
To have abstained from wedding any dame
Betrothed to me. He in an evil hour
Shall claim atonement for his father's death
Of Phœbus mighty king; nor shall repentance
For these audacious blasphemies avail
To save the miscreant on whose impious head
Apollo wreaks just vengeance; by his wrath
O'ertaken, and entangled in my snares,
He wretchedly shall perish. For the gods
Subvert the prosperous fortunes of their foes
Nor suffer pride to rear her towering crest.

[*Exeunt* ORESTES *and* HERMIONE

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Phœbus, thou god who with a mound
Of stately towers didst Ilion's rock surround;
And thou, O Neptune, ruler of the main,
Borne swiftly by thy azure steeds
In a light car, who cleav'st the watery plain
After exerting with unwearied toil
Such skill as human works exceeds,
'Gainst wretched Troy when Mars his javelin bore,
Why, faithless to that chosen soil,
Left ye your city drenched in gore?

I. 2.

The steeds ye yoked on Simois' banks
Whirled many a chariot through the broken ranks;
No hero gathered in that stubborn fray
One laurel to adorn his head:
Phrygia's illustrious rulers swept away,
Took their last voyage to a distant shore,
And mingled with the vulgar dead,
While the polluted altars ceased to gleam
Upwafting to the skies no more
Their frankincense in odorous steam.

II. 1.

Slain by his wife Atrides fell;
His furious son sent to the shades of Hell
The murderess, and returned th' unnatural deed,
That fatal stroke the god approved,
His oracles ordained that she should bleed,
When young Orestes at the inmost shrine
Was by a heavenly impulse moved,
His hands in gore maternal to imbrue.
O Phœbus, O thou power divine,
How shall I think th' assertion true?

II. 2.

In Greece doth many a dame complain
Chaunting rude dirges for her children slain;
Others their native land reluctant leave,
And to a foreign lord are brought.
Nor yet hast thou alone just cause to grieve,
Nor to thy friends hath Heaven's peculiar hate
These signal miseries wrought:
Victorious Greece still feels as deep a wound,
From whence the thunderbolt of fate
Through Phrygia scattered deaths around.

PELEUS, CHORUS.

Peleus. Answer my questions, O ye Phthian dames,
For doubtful is the rumour I have heard,
That Menelaus' daughter, when she left
This house departed from the realm. I come
Anxious to learn if this account be true.
For 'tis their duty who remain at home
To guard the fortunes of their absent friends.

Chorus. What thou hast heard, O Peleus, is the truth,
And ill would it become me to conceal
The woes in which I deeply am involved:
Our royal mistress from these walls is fled.

Peleus. What feared she? say.

Chorus. The anger of her lord,
Lest he from these abodes should cast her forth.

Peleus. Because she plotted to have slain the boy?

Chorus. E'en so it was. Yon captive too she dreaded,

Peleus. But from these mansions did she go, attended,
Or by her father or by whom?
Chorus. The son
Of Agamemnon from this land conveyed her.
Peleus. What are his views? to take her for his bride?
Chorus. Thy grandson too he meditates to slay.
Peleus. Stationed in secret ambush, or resolved
To meet the dauntless warrior face to face?
Chorus. Beneath Apollo's unpolluted fane
With Delphi's citizens.
Peleus. Atrocious crime!
Ah me! will no one with his utmost speed
Go to the altar of the Pythian god,
And to our friends disclose what passes here,
Ere by his foes Achilles' son is slain?

MESSENGER, PELEUS, CHORUS.

Mess. What evil tidings do I bring to you,
O aged man, and all my master's friends!
Peleus. By a sad presage which affects my soul.
I of th' impending evil am forewarned.
Mess. Know then, O Peleus, that your wretched grandson
Is now no more, with such unnumbered wounds
He by the Delphic citizens transpierced,
And by that stranger from Mycene died.
Chorus. Alas! alas! but what resource is left
For thee, thou hoary veteran? do not fall;
Raise thyself up.
Peleus. To very nothing now
Am I reduced, I utterly am ruined:
The power of speech deserts me, and these limbs
Forget their office.
Mess. Hear me, and from earth
Arise, if, with th' assistance of your friends,
You for this murder wish to be revenged.
Peleus. How hast thou compassed wretched me, who stand
On the last verge of spiritless old age,
O cruel fate! say how the only son
Of my deceased, my only son, was slain.
These tidings though unwelcome would I hear.
Mess. After we reached Apollo's sacred realm,

While thrice the chariot of the sun performed
Its bright career, we satiated our eyes
With viewing all around. The circumstance
Which raised suspicion first, was this: the people
Who dwell within the temple of the god
Held frequent meetings, and in crowds assembled
Meanwhile the son of Agamemnon went
Through the whole city, and in every ear
Whispered malignant words like these: "Behold
Him who is visiting the hallowed shrine
Of Phœbus piled with gold, the treasures given
By all mankind; the miscreant comes again
On the same purpose which first drew him hither,
To overthrow the temple of the god."
Through the whole city hence an evil rumour
Went forth, and all the magistrates, to whom
The holy treasures were consigned, assembled,
In secret councils heard, and placed a guard
Behind the massive columns in the fane.
We unapprized of this, meantime had caught
Some sheep, that fed amid Parnassus' grove,
And with our Delphic friends and Pythian seers
Approached the altar: some one said: "Young man,
What vows on thy behalf shall we address
To Phœbus? for what purpose art thou come?"
He answered: "To the god I wish to make
A due atonement for my past offence,
Because I erst from him with impious tongue
Claimed satisfaction for my father's blood."
Hence did Orestes' calumnies appear
To have great weight, suggesting that my lord
Spoke an untruth, and that he hither came
With vile designs. Beneath the holy roof,
That to Apollo he might offer up
His prayers in that oracular abode,
He now advanced, and as they blazed, observed
The victims: here a troop with falchions armed
Screened by the branching laurels stood; the son
Of Clytemnestra was the sole contriver
Of all these stratagems. Our lord stood forth,
And, in the sight of this insidious band,
Adored the god: while they with their keen swords,

Ere he discerned them, pierced Achilles' son
Unsheathed in mail. He instantly retreated;
For he as yet had by no deadly wound
Been smitten; but snatched up in his retreat
Those glittering arms which near the portals hung,
And stood a champion terrible to view,
Close to the blazing altar: with loud voice
He questioned the inhabitants of Delphi:
"Me who a pious votary hither come,
Why, or for what offences, would ye slay!"
Although the number of his foes was great,
None of them answered, but all hands hurled stones:
On every side assaulted by a storm
Thick as the falling snows, he warded off,
Extending the broad margin of his shield,
Each missile weapon: but of no avail
Was this resistance: for the spear, the shaft,
The dart, were thrown at once, and at his feet
Mixed instruments of sacrifice lay scattered.
Th' agility with which your grandson shunned
The blows they aimed, was wondrous to behold:
They in a circle gathering round, closed in,
Nor gave him space to breathe, till from the altar
Descending with a leap like that which bore
The hapless Grecian chief to Phrygia's coast,
He rushed among them: like a flock of doves
Who see the hawk appear, they turned and fled:
In heaps on heaps promiscuous, many fell,
Some in the narrow passage wounded lay,
While others o'er them trampled, and their groans
Unholy echoed through the hallowed dome.
But, tranquil as the waters in a calm,
In golden arms my lord resplendent stood,
Till from the inmost sanctuary burst forth
A deep-toned voice of horror, which impelled
The recreant warriors to renew the fight:
Achilles' son then smitten through the flank
With a keen sword, by one of Delphi fell,
Who slew him, yet ignobly, with the aid
Of multitudes. But after he to earth
Was fallen, what sword transpierced him not, what hand
Threw not a stone to smite him? his whole frame,

So graceful erst, was with unnumbered wounds
Disfigured: till at length his mangled corse,
Which stained the altar's basis, from the fane
Drenched with the blood of victims they cast forth.
But gathering up with speed, his loved remains
To you we bear, O venerable man,
That o'er them you may shed the plenteous tear,
And grace them with sepulchral rites. Thus Phœbus,
Who prophesies to others, mighty king,
And deals out justice to th' admiring world,
Hath on Achilles' son revenged himself,
And, like some worthless human foe, revived
An ancient grudge: how then can he be wise?
[*Exit* MESSENGER

Chorus. But lo! our royal master, from the land
Of Delphi borne, approaches these abodes!
Wretched was he, by such untimely doom
O'ertaken: nor art thou, O aged man,
Less wretched than the slaughtered youth: for thou
Into thy doors receiv'st Achilles' son,
But not as thou couldst wish; thou too art fallen
Into affliction's snare.

Peleus. What piteous object,
Ah me! do I behold, and with these hands
Receive into my house! we are undone,
We are undone, O thou Thessalian city;
I have no children, no descendants left,
To occupy these mansions. On what friend
Shall I a wretched sufferer turn my eyes,
And hope to find relief? O thou dear face,
Ye cheeks, ye hands! thee would to Heaven that fate
In those embattled fields of Troy had slain
Beside the waves of Simois!

Chorus. He in death
Hence would have found renown; thou too, old man,
Wouldst have been happier.

Peleus. Thou, O wedlock, wedlock,
These mansions and my city hast o'erthrown.
My grandson, through the inauspicious nuptials
By thee contracted, would to heaven my gates
Had ne'er received that execrable fiend

Hermione, thy bane! O had she first
With thunderbolts been smitten! nor hadst thou,
Presumptuous mortal, charged the Delphic god
With having aimed the shaft which slew thy sire!

Chorus. I will awake the sad funereal dirge,
And wailing pay to my departed lord
Such customary tribute as attends
The shades of mighty chiefs.

Peleus. Ah me! at once
With misery and old age bowed down to earth,
I shed th' incessant tear.

Chorus. Thus hath the god
Ordained, the god's vindictive arm hath wrought
All these calamities.

Peleus. O most beloved,
This house, ah me! a desert hast thou left,
And me a miserable old man made childless.

Chorus. Before thy children, O thou aged man,
Thou shouldst have died.

Peleus. Shall I not rend my hair,
And beat with desperate hands this hoary head?
O city! Phœbus hath of both my sons
Deprived me.

Chorus. O thou miserable old man,
What evils hast thou witnessed and endured!
How wilt thou pass the remnant of thy life?

Peleus. Childless, forlorn, no period to my woes
Can I discover, but till death must drink
The bitter potion.

Chorus. Sure the gods in vain
Showered blessings on thy nuptials.

Peleus. Fled and withered
Is all our ancient pomp.

Chorus. Alone thou mov'st
Around thy lonely house.

Peleus. I have no city.
Thee, O my sceptre, to the ground I cast,
And from yon dreary caverns of the main,
Daughter of Nereus, me wilt thou behold
Utterly ruined, grovelling in the dust.

Chorus. Ha! who was it that moved? what form divine
Do I perceive? look there! ye nymphs, attend,

With rapid passage through the fleecy clouds
Borne onward, some divinity arrives
At Phthia's pastures, famed for generous steeds.

THETIS, PELEUS, CHORUS.

Thetis. O Peleus, mindful of the ties which bound
Our plighted love, I hither from the house
Of Nereus come, and with these wholesome counsels
Begin ; despair not, though thy present woes
Are grievous : for e'en I who should have borne
A race of children such as ne'er might cause
My tears to stream, have lost the son who crowned
Our hopes, Achilles, swift of foot, the first
Of Grecian heroes. But to thee, the motives
Which brought me hither, will I now relate ;
O listen to my voice. Back to that altar
Devoted to the Pythian god, convey
This body of Achilles' slaughtered son,
And bury it ; so shall his tomb declare
The murderous violence Orestes' band
Committed : but yon captive dame, I mean
Andromache, on Helenus bestowed
In marriage, in Molossia's land must dwell,
And her young son, the only royal branch
Which of the stem of Æacus remains ;
From him in long succession shall a race
Of happy kings Molossia's sceptre wield :
Nor will our progeny, O aged man,
Be utterly extinct, when blended thus
With Ilion, still protected by the gods,
Though by Minerva's stratagems it fell.
But, as for thee, that thou mayst know the blessing
Of having wedded me, who am by birth
A goddess and the daughter of a god,
From all the ills which wait on human life
Releasing, thee immortal will I make
And incorruptible ; with me a goddess
In Nereus' watery mansions thou a god
Hereafter shalt reside, and from the waves
Emerging with dry feet, behold our son
Achilles, to his parents justly dear,

Inhabiting that Isle whose chalky coasts
Are laved by the surrounding Euxine deep.
But go to Delphi's city by the gods
Erected, thither bear this weltering corse,
And when thou hast interred it, to this land
Return, and in that cave which through the rock
Of Sepia time hath worn, thy station keep
Till from the waves I with my sister choir
The fifty Nereids come, to bear thee hence.
Thou must endure the woes imposed by fate,
For thus hath Jove ordained. But cease to grieve
For the deceased: for by the righteous gods
The same impartial sentence is awarded
To the whole human race, and death's a debt
Which all must pay.

Peleus. Hail, venerable dame,
Daughter of Nereus, my illustrious wife:
For what thou dost is worthy of thyself,
And of thy progeny. I cease to grieve
At thy command, O goddess, and will go,
Soon as my grandson's corse I have interred,
To Pelion's cave, where first thy beauteous form
I in these arms received. The man whose choice
Is by discretion guided, should select
A consort nobly born, and give his daughters
To those of virtuous families, nor wish
To wed a damsel sprung from worthless sires,
Though to his house a plenteous dower she bring:
So shall he ne'er incur the wrath of Heaven.

Chorus. A thousand shapes our varying fates assume,
The gods perform what we could least expect,
And oft the things for which we fondly hoped
Come not to pass: but Heaven still finds a clue
To guide our steps through life's perplexing maze.
And thus does this important business end.

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

AGAMEMNON.	IPHIGENIA.
MENELAUS.	ATTENDANT.
ACHILLES.	MESSENGER.
CLYTEMNESTRA.	CHORUS, FEMALES OF CHALCIS

AGAMEMNON, ATTENDANT.

Agam. Thou old and faithful servant, from the house
Come forth.
Attend. I come. What recent care disturbs
The royal Agamemnon?
Agam. Thou shalt know.
Attend. I haste: for not to sleep inclines my age,
Nor in these eyes is dull.
Agam. What star is that
There sailing?
Attend. Sirius, in his middle height
Near the seven Pleiads riding.
Agam. Not the sound
Of birds is heard, nor of the sea; the winds
Are hushed in silence on the Euripus.
Attend. Why doth the royal Agamemnon then
Rush from his tent? Through Aulis quiet reigns,
And motionless the watch their station hold.
Let us go in.
Agam. I envy thee, old man;
I envy all, who pass their lives secure
From danger, to the world, to fame unknown:
But those to greatness raised I envy not.
Attend. The dignity of life in greatness lies.
Agam. Yet is that dignity unsafe: the chase
Of glory is delightful, but when won
It brings disquiet. One while from the gods,
Their worship ill directed, ruin comes;

One while the various and discordant views
Of men distract the mind, and wound its peace.

Attend. This I approve not in a potent chief.
Not to all good, without a taste of ill,
Did Atreus give thee birth: it must be thine
To joy, it likewise must be thine to grieve,
For thou art mortal born; and though perchance
To thee not pleasing, thus the gods decree.
The blazing lamp didst thou display, and write
That letter, which thou holdest in thy hand
E'en now; the writing didst thou blot; then seal,
And open it again; then on the floor
Cast it in grief, the warm tear from thine eye
Fast flowing, in thy thoughts distracted near,
As it should seem, to madness. What new care,
My royal lord, say what new care disturbs thee?
Tell me, impart it to me: to a man
Honest and faithful wilt thou speak, a man
By Tyndarus of old sent to thy wife,
A nuptial present, to attend the bride,
One of tried faith, and to his office just.

Agam. To Leda were three beauteous daughters born,
Phœbe, and Clytemnestra now my wife,
And Helena: to her the youths of Greece,
Those of the noblest rank, as wooers came.
Each menaced high, on deeds of blood resolved,
Should he not win the virgin; this was cause
To Tyndarus her father of much doubt,
To give, or not to give her, and how best
To make good fortune his; at length this thought
Occurred, that each to each the wooers give
Their oath, and plight their hands, and on the flames
Pour the libations, and with solemn vows
Bind their firm faith that him who should obtain
The virgin for his bride they all would aid;
If any dared to seize and bear her off,
And drive by force her husband from her bed,
All would unite in arms, and lay his town,
Greek or Barbaric, level with the ground.
Their faith thus pledged, the aged Tyndarus
Beneath them well with cautious prudence wrought
He gave his daughter of her wooers one

To choose, tow'rds whom the gentle gales of love
Should waft her: and she chose (O had he ne'er
Obtained that envied favour!) Menelaus.
To Lacedemon now the Phrygian came,
The judge between the beauties of the sky,
So fame reports him: gorgeous was his dress,
Glitt'ring with gold and vermeil-tinctured dyes,
Barbaric elegance. He loved, was loved,
And bore the beauteous Helena away
To Ida's pastoral groves; for Menelaus
Was absent then. Deserted thus through Greece
He raved, the oaths attesting giv'n of old
To Tyndarus, conjuring all t' avenge
His wrongs. On this the Grecians rush to war,
And taking arms come hither to the straits
Of Aulis, furnished well with ships, with spears,
And num'rous chariots: me they chose their chief,
Doing a grace to Menelaus, for that
I am his brother. O that this high honour
Some other had received, not I! The troops
Collected and embodied, here we sit
Unactive, and from Aulis wish to sail
In vain. The prophet Calchas, 'midst the gloom
That darkened on our minds, at length pronounced
That Iphigenia, my virgin daughter,
I to Diana, goddess of this land,
Must sacrifice: this victim giv'n, the winds
Shall swell our sails, and Troy beneath our arms
Be humbled in the dust; but if denied,
These things are not to be. This when I heard,
I said that by the herald's voice the troops
Should be discharged, for never would I bear
To slay my daughter; till my brother came,
And, urging many a plea, persuaded me
To bear these dreadful things. I wrote, I sealed
A letter to my wife, that she should send
Her daughter to Achilles as a bride
Affianced: of his worth I spoke in terms
Of amplest honour; said he would not sail
With Greece, unless from us his nuptial bed
Was decked in Phthia: with my wife this found
Easy belief, the false tale that announced

Her daughter's destined marriage. Of the Greeks
None but Ulysses, Calchas, and my brother
To this are conscious. What I then resolved
Imprudently, I prudently retract,
Committed to this letter, which thou sawst me
This night, old man, unfold and fold again,
Take then this letter, haste, to Argos go.
That there is written, in its secret folds
Enclosed, I will explain to thee; for thou
Art faithful to my wife and to my house.

Attend. Read it, explain its purport, that my words
May aptly with thy writing correspond.

Agam. "Whate'er my former letter gave in charge,
[*Reads.*
Daughter of Leda, this I write to thee,
That to Eubœa's winding way thou send not
Thy daughter, nor to Aulis rising high
Above the waves; for to some other time
The nuptials of the virgin we defer."

Attend. Will not Achilles, frustrate of his bride,
Be fired with rage 'gainst thee, and 'gainst thy wife?
This might be dang'rous: is not such thy thought?

Agam. His name indeed we used, but nothing more:
Achilles knows not of the nuptials, knows
Of our transactions nought, nor that I named
My daughter his, as to his bed betrothed.

Attend. This, royal Agamemnon, is a deed
Of perilous daring. So thy daughter, named
A bride to him who from a goddess draws
His birth, thou ledd'st a victim for the Grecians.

Agam. Distraction's in the thought: unhappy me,
My misery sinks me! But away! To age
Remitting nothing, use thy utmost speed

Attend. I hasten, king.

Agam. Now sit not on the bank
Of shaded fountain, nor indulge to sleep.

Attend. Think better of me.

Agam. Take good heed, where'er
The ways divide, observing that the car,
Whose wheels swift-rolling bear my daughter hither
Where rides the fleet of Greece, escape thee not.

Attend. I shall observe.

Agam. Now haste thee from the tent.
If on thy way thou meet her, backward turn
Her reins, and send her to Mycenæ's walls
Raised by the Cyclops.
Attend. How, if I shall say
This to thy wife and daughter, shall I gain
Belief?
Agam. This seal, whose impress on that letter
Thou bearst, take with thee. Go; that silver light
Shows the approach of morn, the harbinger
Of the sun's fiery steeds. Be in my toils
Assistant to me: for of mortals none
Knows a pure course of unmixed happiness;
None yet was born without a share of grief.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Thus have I reached the sandy shore
Where Aulis rises from the dashing wave,
Nor feared its foam to brave,
The narrow Euripus advent'ring o'er;
My native Chalcis left, that feeds the pride
Of the swift current hast'ning to the main,
Illustrious Arethusa's silver tide.
The Grecian camp, the Grecian fleet, the train
Of demigods I wish to see,
Who with a thousand ships, that wait to bear
'Gainst Troy the vengeful war
(For thus our husbands say the states decree),
By the imperial Agamemnon led,
In arms for bright-haired Menelaus arise,
And Helen ravished from his nuptial bed;
Her from Eurota's sedgy bank his prize
The shepherd Paris bore away,
The gift of Venus on that day
When, nigh the dewy fountain as she stood
Contending with the rival forms of heaven,
To her the palm of beauty given,
In all her radiant charms the goddess glowed.

Antistrophe 1.

Diana's hallowed grove I seek,
Where to the goddess frequent victims bleed,
And through it pass with speed,
The warm blush kindling on my youthful cheek,
Ardent my wish to view the guard of shields,
The armed tents of Greece extended wide,
Their horse in warlike muster o'er the fields,
And all the glorious scene of martial pride.
There either Ajax struck my sight,
One from Oïleus draws his birth, and one
From greater Telamon,
Salamis glories in her hero's might.
These sitting with Protesilaus I saw
Delighted with the various-figured die.
But Palamedes, proud his birth to draw
From Neptune, with Tydides whirled on high
The massy discus: Merion there
Rejoiced the manly sport to share,
Wondrous the hero's form and martial grace;
Ulysses there, whose island's craggy brow
Frowns o'er the darkened waves below;
And Nireus, fairest of the Grecian race.

Epode 1.

Swift as the wingéd wing
Achilles, whom the goddess Thetis bore,
And gave to Chiron in his rigid lore
To train his infant mind,
I saw: in all his arms arrayed,
The cumbrous equipage of war,
His speed he o'er the strand displayed,
Contending with the harnessed car:
High o'er the beam I saw Eumelus rise,
I heard his animating cries,
And marked each courser beauteous to behold,
Their glitt'ring bits embossed with gold:
Those in the midst, the yoke that bear.
Dappled with silvery marks their hair;
And each on either side
That wind, obedient to the guiding rein,

With equal swiftness o'er the plain,
Bright as the flaming gold, with pride
On snow-white fetlocks bound
With rival speed I saw Pelides fly,
In arms, the whirling chariot nigh,
Light o'er the pebbled ground.

Strophe 2.

Hence to the numerous fleet I fly,
A vast and glorious sight,
To gratify my curious eye,
A woman's dear delight.
On the right wing from Phthia's strand
The Myrmidons, a valiant band,
In fifty gallant vessels ride;
And by the Nereids we behold,
Bright on the prows in sculptured gold
Achilles' arms are signified.

Antistrophe 2.

The Argive ships of equal oars
Next these their station hold;
The son of Talaus leads their powers,
And Sthenelus the bold.
In order next th' Athenian train
In sixty vessels plough the main,
Their host the son of Theseus leads:
Adorning the Munychian prows
In arms a sculptured Pallas glows,
Inspiring high heroic deeds.

[*The second Epode is lost.*]

Strophe 3.

Bœotia's host I there surveyed,
In fifty ships the warriors came:
An imaged form each ship displayed,
Proud argument of Theban fame;
High on each sculptured prow their Cadmus stands,
A golden dragon holding in his hands;
And Leïtus, who boasts his birth

From those that sprung embattled from the earth,
Commands their naval war.
Those, who their race from Phocis draw,
Ranged on the foaming flood I saw.
Oïlean Ajax there,
Equal his numbers, leads the Locrian train,
Leaving illustrious Thronion's plain.

Antistrophe 3.

From high Mycenæ's rampired towers,
Towers by the lab'ring Cyclops wrought,
The son of Atreus leads his powers;
A hundred ships the monarch brought;
And faithful at his side, as friend with friend,
These eyes beheld the injured chief attend;
That for the fair, her house who fled,
Lightly preferring a barbaric bed,
Greece with a gen'rous rage
Might rise and vindicate his cause.
His troops from Pylos Nestor draws,
Reverend the warrior's age;
On his tall vessels sculptured Alpheus stands,
A bull, and seems to spurn the sands.

Epode 3.

From Ænia's stormy coast
By Geneus led twelve vessels plough the tide;
The chiefs of Elis anchor by their side;
These through th' extended host
Are called the brave Epëan train,
And Eurytus their force commands.
Dashed by their oars the foaming main
Whitens beneath the Taphian bands;
Meges their leader, from that dangerous shore,
Where rough Echinæ's vext rocks roar.
The Salaminian Ajax to the right
Stretches, the left wing to unite;
The last in station, o'er the deep
His fleetest vessels circling sweep.
In all their gallant pride
I heard, I saw them stretch: to meet their war

Should the barbaric slight barks dare,
Shattered and sunk beneath the tide,
They will return no more.
I heard, I saw; and all the warlike train
Faithful my memory shall retain,
When reached my native shore.

ATTENDANT, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

Attend. This, Menelaus, is wrong; thou shouldst not do it.
Mene. Go to: thou wouldst be faithful to thy lords!
Attend. That is an honour to me, no reproach.
Mene. Wouldst thou do what thou shouldst not, thou shalt rue it.
Attend. Thou shouldst not ope the letter which I bear.
Mene. Thou shouldst not bear what to all Greece is hurtful.
Attend. With others dispute that; leave this to me.
Mene. I will not let it go.
Attend. Nor will I yield it.
Mene. Soon shall thy head this sceptre stain with blood.
Attend. Nay, it were glorious for my lords to die.
Mene. Let go: a slave presuming to dispute!
Attend. My royal master, we are wronged: by force
Thy letter hath he wrested from my hands,
To what behoves him paying no regard.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

Agam. Why this indecent tumult at my doors?
Attend. My words have greater right than his t' inform thee.
Agam. Why, Menelaus, this strife with him, this force?
Mene. Look, if thou darst, at me; then will I speak.
Agam. Fear I, from Atreus born, to raise mine eye?
Mene. Dost thou see this, with basest orders charged?
Agam. I see it: from thy hand first give it back.
Mene. Not till I've shown all Greece what's written here.
Agam. Knowst thou, this opened, what thou shouldst not know?
Mene. To wring thy heart, opening thy secret baseness.
Agam. Where didst thou take it? Gods, hast thou no shame?
Mene. Watching from Argos if thy daughter comes.
Agam. On my affairs a spy! How shameless this!

Mene. Urged by my will: for I am not thy slave.
Agam. Have I not leave in mine own house to rule?
Mene. How wayward is thy mind, thy present thoughts
At variance with the past, and soon to change!
Agam. Finely thy words are tuned: but know thou this,
The wily tongue is a detested ill.
Mene. The wav'ring mind is a base property,
And darkens to our friends: I will convince thee:
But if through pride thou turn thee from the truth,
Small share of praise shalt thou receive from me.
Thou knowest, when thy aim was to command
The troops of Greece at Troy, thy semblance formed
As if affecting nothing, but thy wish
Most ardent; what humility was thine:
Pressing the hand of each, thy door to all
Was open, to the meanest, and thy speech
To all addressed in order, e'en to those
Who willed no converse with thee, seeking thus
By courteous manners thy ambitious wish
To purchase. The supreme command obtained,
Soon were thy manners changed, and to thy friends
Not friendly as before; nor was access
Easy, oft too denied. Ill it becomes
An honest man, when raised to power, to change
His manners, but then most to be approved
Firm to his friends, when through his advanced state
He most can serve them: this I urge against thee
As my first charge, where first I found thee base.
But when thou camst to Aulis, with the troops
Of Greece in arms, to nothing didst thou sink,
Astonished at thy fortune, by the gods
Denied a gale to swell thy sails. The Greeks
Required thee to dismiss the ships, nor toil
In vain at Aulis: how dejected then
Thy visage, thy confusion then how great
Not to command the thousand ships, and fill
The fields of Priam with embattled hosts?
Me then didst thou address, "What shall I do,
Or what expedient find, of this command,
Of this high honour not to be deprived?"
When Calchas at the hallowed rites declared
That to Diana thou must sacrifice

Thy daughter, and the Grecians then should sail,
With joy thy thoughts were heightened; willingly
The virgin as a victim didst thou promise
And freely, not by force (urge not that plea),
Dost thou despatch a message to thy wife
To send thy daughter hither, the pretence
Her nuptials with Achilles. But thy mind
Was soon averse, and secretly devised
Letters of diff'rent import; now in sooth
Thou wilt not be the murd'rer of thy daughter.
This air is witness, which hath heard these things
Of thee. To thousands this hath chanced in tasks
Of arduous nature; freely they engage,
Then from the high attempt retreat with shame,
Th' ill judgment of their countrymen in part,
Justice in part the cause, for in the proof
They feel their want of power to guard the state.
But most I mourn th' unhappy fate of Greece,
Who, prompt her noble vengeance to inflict
On the barbarians, worthless as they are,
Shall let them now go scoffing off, through thee,
And through thy daughter. Never for his wealth
Would I appoint a ruler o'er the state,
Or chief in arms: wisdom should mark the man
Who in his country bears the sov'reign sway:
Every man sage in counsel is a leader.

Chorus. How dreadful, when 'twixt brothers words arise,
And fierce disputings kindle into strife!

Agam. For this I will rebuke thee; but in brief,
Not raising high the eye of insolence,
But with more temperance, because thou art
My brother; for a good man loves to act
With modesty. But tell me, why with rage
Dost thou thus swell? why rolls thy blood-streaked eye?
Who injures thee? of what art thou in want?
A rich connubial bed, is that thy wish?
This to procure thee is not in my power.
Thou didst possess one, but ill governed it.
Shall I, who with no fault have e'er been charged,
Suffer for thy ill conduct? Is thy heart
Racked at my honours? But a beauteous wife

In thy fond arms it is thy wish to hold,
Transgressing decency and reason: base
Of a bad man the pleasures. But if I,
Before ill-judging, have with sober thought
My purpose changed, must I be therefore deemed
Reft of my sense? Thou rather, who hast lost
A wife that brings thee shame, yet dost with warmth
Wish to regain her, would the fav'ring god
Grant thee that fortune. Of the nuptials eager
The suitors pledged to Tyndarus their oath,
Unwise: the hope, I ween, of the fair bride
Effected this, more than thy grace or power:
Take these, and march to war; soon wilt thou find
What oaths avail ill plighted, with slight thought,
And by compulsion. But I will not slay
My children: and thy wishes o'erleap justice,
The punishment of thy flagitious wife.
My nights, my days would pass away in tears,
Should I with outrage and injustice wrong
Those who from me derived their birth. These things
Have I replied to thee in brief, with ease
And plainness: but if thou wilt not be wise,
What concerns me I rightly will appoint.

Chorus. These words are different from his former speech,
And well the father's melting pity show.

Mene. Ah me unhappy! I have then no friends.

Agam. Yes, if thou wish not to destroy thy friends.

Mene. How wilt thou show one father gave us birth?

Agam. I would be wise, but not be mad with thee.

Mene. Friends with their friends in common ought to grieve.

Agam. Be thy deeds friendly then, not painful to me.

Mene. And with all Greece shouldst thou not bear this pain?

Agam. All Greece, and thee, hath heaven-sent frenzy seized.

Mene. Thou gloriest in thy sceptre, and betray'st
Thy brother. But to other means I turn,
And other friends.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mess. I come, imperial lord
Of Greece, thy daughter leading, in thine house

Named Iphigenia by thee; and thy wife
Attends her, Clytemnestra, with thy son
Orestes, sight delightful to thine eyes
After this tedious absence from thy home.
But wearied with this length of way, beside
A beauteous-flowing fountain they repose,
Themselves refreshing, and their steeds, unyoked
To taste the fresh grass of the verdant mead.
I run to bring thee notice, that prepared
Thou mayst receive them: this the troops have heard
For through the camp swift the report was spread
That Iphigenia is arrived, and all
Haste to the sight desirous to behold
Thy daughter; for to every eye the great
Appear illustrious, with high splendour graced.
Is this her bridal day, some ask, or what
Intended? Or through fond desire to see
His daughter did th' imperial Agamemnon
Send for the virgin? Others mightst thou hear,
The princess to Diana, queen of Aulis,
Will they present? Who shall receive her hand?
But haste, begin the rites, and crown thy head.
And thou too, royal Menelaus, prepare
The hymeneals; let the joyful house
Re-echo to the pipe and festive dance:
For happy to the virgin comes this day.

Agam. 'Tis well: thou hast my thanks. But go thou in;
All things, if fortune favours, shall be well.—
Ah me, unhappy me! What shall I say,
And whence begin? In what a chain of fate
Am I enfolded? Fortune, wiser far
Than all my vain designs, hath closely wrought
Beneath me. What advantages attend
Ignoble birth? They are allowed to weep
And utter sad complaints; but to the noble
This is denied. Led by the pride of rank,
Which rules us, to the people we are slaves.
I am indeed ashamed to drop the tear,
And not to drop the tear I am ashamed,
Fall'n as I am on these great miseries.
Well, let it be. But how shall I address
My wife, or how receive her? with what eye

Look on her? For to all my former ills
Coming unbidden, she hath added weight
Of new distress: yet decency required
Her presence with her daughter, to attend
Her nuptials, and present the dearest gifts:
There will she find me false. But thee, O thee,
Unhappy bride (bride call I thee! how soon
To Pluto to be wedded!), how I pity!
Methinks I hear her suppliant voice thus speak,
"My father, wilt thou kill me? Mayst thou make
Thyself such nuptials, and whoe'er to thee
Is dear." Orestes, standing near, shall cry
In accents inarticulate, his speech,
As yet unformed, articulate to me.
Unhappy me! what ruin hath the son
Of Priam brought on me! This Paris caused
When he espoused the faithless Helena.

Chorus. I, as a woman and a stranger ought,
Am moved with pity at a monarch's woes.

Mene. Give me thy hand, my brother, let me clasp it.

Agam. I give it: thou art conqueror, I a wretch.

Mene. By Pelops, called the father of thy father
And mine: by Atreus, whence we draw our birth,
I swear, that what I now shall say to thee
Comes from my heart, nought feigned, but what I think.
When from thine eye I saw thee drop the tear,
I pitied thee, and sympathizing dropped
Myself a tear: its former reas'nings now
My soul foregoes, no more unkind to thee,
But, as thou feelest, feels: nay, I exhort thee
Neither to slay thy daughter, nor to rank
What concerns me most high: it is not just
That grief should rend thy heart, whilst my affairs
Go pleasantly; that any of thy house
Should die, whilst mine behold the light. For what
Can be my purpose? Might I not contract
Other illustrious nuptials, if my wish
Were other nuptials? But at such a price,
My brother's ruin, which behoves me least,
Should I recover Helena, an ill
Dear with a blessing purchased? Folly ruled

Before, and youth: but on a nearer view
I see what 'tis to yield a child to death.
Besides th' unhappy virgin, near allied
By ties of consanguinity, excites
My pity, destined for a nuptial bed
To fall a victim: what hath she to do,
The virgin daughter, with my Helena?
Discharged from Aulis let the troops depart.
And thou, my brother, cease to dew thine eyes
With tears, which cause the drops to start in mine.
Touching thy daughter hast thou oracles
Which respect me; no more be that respect;
My part I cede to thee. My thoughts are changed
From cruel, and I feel what I should feel:
Nature returns, and all a brother's love
Warm in my heart revives: of no bad man
The manners these, to follow still the best.

Chorus. Generous thy words, and worthy Tantalus
The son of Jove: thou dost not shame thy birth.

Agam. Now I applaud thee; for beyond my thought
Rightly thy words conclude, and worthy thee.

Mene. For love and for ambition variance oft
Rises 'twixt brothers: but my soul abhors
This mutual harshness of unnatural strife.

Agam. But dire necessity compels me now
My daughter's bloody slaughter to complete.

Mene. Who shall compel thee to destroy thy child?

Agam. The whole assembled host of Greece in arms.

Mene. Not if to Argos her thou send again.

Agam. That might be secret: this must be revealed.

Mene. What? Of the people have not too great dread.

Agam. The oracle will Calchas sound to all.

Mene. Not if ere that he die: an easy thing.

Agam. Vainglorious is the whole prophetic breed.

Mene. And of no use when present, of no good.

Agam. But seest thou not what enters now my thought?

Mene. Can I conjecture what thou dost not speak?

Agam. He of the race of Sisyphus knows all.

Mene. Nor thee, nor me, will e'er Ulysses harm.

Agam. Artful, the people as he wills he leads.

Mene. With vanity, a mighty ill, possessed.

Agam. Think then thou seest him stand amidst the troops,

Declaring to them all the oracle
Announced by Calchas: how this sacrifice
I promised to Diana, then refused.
Soon will he lead the Grecians, and excite them,
Me in their fury having slain, and thee,
To sacrifice the virgin. Should I fly
To Argos, marching thither they will raze
Her rampires by the Cyclops raised, and spread
Destruction o'er the land. Unhappy me!
Such ills are mine, to this severe distress
Brought by the gods! Yet one thing make thy care:
Take heed, as through the host they steps return,
These tidings reach not Clytemnestra's ear,
Till I the virgin to th' infernal king
Shall have presented, that I may abide
With as few tears as may be my hard fate.
Silence, ye female strangers, be your part.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

How blest their golden days, who prove
The gentle joys of temp'rate love,
When modest Venus on the couch attends.
Pleased with tranquillity to dwell!
But high the madd'ning passions swell,
When both his bows the bright-haired tyrant bends;
One, by the Graces strung, imparts
Pure joys that brighten in our hearts;
And one, life's wild tumultuous war.
Far, beauteous Queen, from us may this be far;
Mine be Love's pure and temp'rate grace,
The holy flame of chaste desire,
Mild Venus, in my breast inspire;
There never have ungoverned passion place:

Antistrophe.

Nature in man we diff'ring find,
And diff'rent manners mark his mind:
When good, they give each excellence to spring,
And education's sage control
To every virtue forms the soul:

Meek modesty then Wisdom loves to bring,
She loves to bring each various grace,
Which shows where duty hath its place,
Whence Glory beams divinely bright,
And pours on life unfailing streams of light.
Virtues in woman fairest shine
That silent guard Love's holy flame;
Man's various worth ascends to fame
Most, when t' exalt the state his great design.

Epode.

Thence, Paris, didst thou come,
Where, on Ida's pastured brow
Trained the snowy herds among,
Thine was the barbaric song,
Thine to bid the sweet notes flow,
Whilst thy Phrygian pipe breathes measures,
Caught from those harmonious treasures
Which Olympus taught his reed.
Unmilked herds around thee feed,
Whilst the contending beauties of the skies
From thee expect the prize.
Hence camest thou to the Grecian shore,
Thy ivory-cinctured house before:
Thy eyes the flames of love inspire,
And Helen, as she gazed, received the fire:
Her charms too rushed upon thy soul,
And madness reigned without control.
Hence discord, discord calls to war:
With many a ship, with many a spear
Greece rushes on, impetuous to destroy
The rampired walls of Troy.
How splended are the fortunes of the great!
See, Iphigenia, daughter of the king,
And Clytemnestra, sprung from Tyndarus,
My queen! From noble ancestors they draw
Their birth, and are to fortune's highest state
Exalted: to th' inferior ranks of life
The powerful and the wealthy are as gods.
Daughters of Chalcis, near them let us stand,
And courteous in our hands receive the queen,

As from her car she to the ground descends,
With duteous zeal, that she may tread secure;
And that th' illustrious daughter of the king
On her arrival nothing may disturb:
For, strangers as we are, let us not cause
These Argive strangers trouble or affright.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, ATTENDANTS, CHORUS.

Clytem. This as a prosp'rous omen I accept,
Thy courtesy and gentleness of speech:
And hence conceive I hope that I am come
To happy nuptials leading her a bride.
But from the chariot take the dow'ral gifts
Brought with me for the virgin; to the house
Bear them with faithful care. My daughter, quit
The harnessed chariot, and thy delicate foot
Place on the ground. Ye females, in your arms
Receive her; she is weak; and from the car
Conduct her down: stretch one of you your hand,
Supporting me, that may I leave this seat
In seemly manner. Some before the yoke
Stand nigh the horses, for their eye is quick,
Soon startled, and unruly: now receive
This child, Orestes, Agamemnon's son,
For he is yet an infant. Dost thou sleep,
My son? The rolling chariot hath subdued thee:
Wake to thy sister's marriage happily;
Th' alliance of a noble youth, thyself
Noble, shalt thou receive, the godlike son
Of Thetis. Come, my daughter, near me stand,
Stand near thy mother, Iphigenia, show
These strangers how supremely I am blest
In thee; and here address thee to thy father.

Iphig. Would it offend my mother, should I run
And throw myself into my father's arms?

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Clytem. Imperial chief of Greece, my honoured lord,
To thy commands obedient we are come.

Iphig. My father, to thy arms I wish to run,

Clasped to thy bosom ; dear to me thy sight
After such absence : be not angry with me.
Agam. Enjoy thy wish : of all my children thou
Hast of thy father always been most fond.
Iphig. Absent so long, with joy I look on thee.
Agam. And I on thee : so this is mutual joy.
Iphig. Well hast thou done to bring me to thy presence.
Agam. If well, or not well done, I cannot say.
Iphig. A gloom hangs on thee 'midst thy joy to see me
Agam. A king and chief hath many anxious cares.
Iphig. But let me have thee now : think not of cares.
Agam. Thou hast me all : each thought is bent on thee.
Iphig. Smooth then thy brow, and look with fondness on me.
Agam. To see thee gives me joy, such joy as mine.
Iphig. Yet from thy melting eye thou pourst the tear.
Agam. Long, very long the absence to ensue.
Iphig. I know not, dearest father, what this means.
Agam. Thy prudent speech makes me more pity thee.
Iphig. Might it divert thee, idly will I talk.
Agam. Can I be silent? O, thou hast my thanks.
Iphig. At home, my father, with thy children stay.
Agam. I wish it : but, that wish denied, I grieve.
Iphig. A mischief on the war, and Sparta's wrongs!
Agam. Others will feel the mischief : I have felt it.
Iphig. How long thy absence in the bay of Aulis!
Agam. Something detains me yet, detains the host.
Iphig. Where, father, do they say the Phrygians dwell?
Agam. Where O that Priam's Paris ne'er had lived!
Iphig. And when thou leavst me is the voyage long?
Agam. To the same place thou with thy father goest.
Iphig. O that with honour I might sail with thee!
Agam. Thou shalt, where thou thy father shalt remember.
Iphig. Go I alone, or sails my mother with me?
Agam. Alone : nor father there, nor mother goes.
Iphig. Dost thou then place me in some other house?
Agam. Ask not : for virgins should not know these things.
Iphig. Haste to me then from Troy, victorious there.
Agam. Here first I must present a sacrifice.
Iphig. Those rites thou with the priests must well prepare.
Agam. Thou shalt be witness, nigh the lavers placed.
Iphig. Shall we then round the altar raise the song?
Agam. Thee happier than myself in this I deem.

That thou art ignorant. But go thou in,
Present thee to the virgins. O, that kiss,
That dear embrace, how painful from a child,
Who from a father must so long be absent!
Ah me, that breast, those cheeks, those golden tresses!
What piercing sorrows hath the Phrygian state
And Helen caused us! But I check my words;
For when I touch thee, in my melting eyes
The sudden moisture rises. Go thou in.—
Daughter of Leda, if with pity touched
I feel my grief too strong, for that I soon
Shall to Achilles my dear child consign,
Forgive me: happy is it so to place
A daughter, yet it pains a father's heart
When he delivers to another house
A child, the object of his tender care.

Clytem. Nor is my heart insensible. I feel,
Be thou assured, an equal grief, nor want
From thee monitions, when I lead the virgin
With hymeneal rites; but custom, joined
With time, will check it. Well: his name I know
To whom thou hast betrothed thy daughter; more
I wish to know, his lineage whence he draws.

Agam. Ægina was the daughter of Asopus.

Clytem. With her what mortal wedded, or what god?

Agam. Jove, sire of Æacus, Œnone's chief.

Clytem. What son of Æacus possessed his house?

Agam. Peleus; the daughter he of Nereus weds.

Clytem. By force, or by the god's consent obtained?

Agam. Her father gave her, first by Jove betrothed.

Clytem. Where did he wed her? In the ocean waves?

Agam. Where Chiron dwells, on Pelion's awful heights.

Clytem. The Centaur race, they say, inhabit there.

Agam. The gods there present graced his nuptial feast.

Clytem. Achilles did the sire or Thetis train?

Agam. Chiron, that from bad men he might not learn.

Clytem. Wise he who took, wise they who gave the charge.

Agam. Such is the man who shall thy daughter wed.

Clytem. Not disapproved; but where in Greece his seat?

Agam. Where flows Apidanus through Phthia's bounds.

Clytem. Thine and my daughter thither will he lead?

Agam. When he obtains her, this will be his care.
Clytem. Blest may they be! But when the bridal day?
Agam. Soon as the moon's propitious circle fills.
Clytem. Is for the bride the previous victim slain?
Agam. Soon shall it: this employs my present thought.
Clytem. And wilt thou next the nuptial feast prepare?
Agam. When I have offered what the gods require.
Clytem. Where for the females shall we deck the feast?
Agam. Here, where the gallant fleet at anchor rides.
Clytem. Amply supply then what th' occasion claims.
Agam. Knowst thou what now I wish thee do? Obey me.
Clytem. In what? Thou long hast trained me to obey.
Agam. We in the place where now the bridegroom is——
Clytem. Without the mother! What to me belongs——
Agam. Will give thy daughter 'midst th' assembled Greeks.
Clytem. And where, whilst this is doing, shall I be?
Agam. To Argos go, thy charge the virgins there.
Clytem. And leave my daughter? Who shall raise the torch?
Agam. The light, to deck the nuptials, I will hold.
Clytem. Custom forbids: nor wouldst thou deem it seemly.
Agam. Nor decent that thou mix with martial troops.
Clytem. But decent that the mother give the daughter.
Agam. Nor leave the younger in the house alone.
Clytem. In close apartments they are guarded well.
Agam. Let me persuade thee.
Clytem. By the potent queen,
Goddess of Argos, no. Of things abroad
Take thou the charge: within the house my care
Shall deck the virgin's nuptials as is meet.
[*She goes in.*

Agam. Unhappy me! In vain I came, my hopes
Are vanished; out of sight it was my wish
To send my wife: thus I devise, thus form
My wily purpose, studious to beguile
Those dearest to my soul, in all my aims
Confounded. Hence to Calchas will I go
The Seer, inquiring what the goddess wills,
To me unfortunate, a grief to Greece.
A wise man in his house should find a wife
Gentle and courteous, or no wife at all.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

To Simois, and his silver tide
In eddies whirling through the plain,
The fleet of Greece in gallant pride
Vengeful shall bear this martial train;
To Ilion's rampired towers shall bear,
And Troy, by Phœbus loved, the war.
Cassandra there, when on her soul
The gods prophetic transports roll,
Her brows with verdant laurel loves to bind,
Her yellow tresses streaming to the wind.

Antistrophe.

The Trojans high on Ilium's towers,
And round the walls of Troy shall stand;
When Mars to Simois leads his powers,
And furious ploughs the hostile strand;
From Priam's ruined house to bear
Again to Greece the fatal fair,
Whose brothers, sons of Jove, on high
Twin stars adorn the spangled sky,
Rushing to war his brazen shield he rears,
And glitt'ring round him blaze the Grecian spears.

Epode.

Phrygian Pergamus around,
Walls of rock with turrets crowned,
Mars the furious war shall lead:
Blood his flaming sword shall stain,
As from the trunk he hews the warrior's head,
And to the dust shakes Troy's proud walls again.
Virgins with their woes opprest,
And Priam's queen their fall lament;
Jove-born Helen beats her breast,
In anguish, from her lover rent.
From me, from mine be far the fate
Which Lydia's gorgeous dames with sighs,
Whilst Troy's sad matrons wipe their dewy eyes,
In mutual converse o'er the web relate,

"Who will not rend her crispéd hair,
Who will not pour the gushing tear,
Low sunk in dust our ruined walls?
Bright daughter of the bird, whose neck
Arched in proud state the white plumes deck,
For thee in dust our country falls
If true the fame that mighty Jove
Changed to a swan sought Leda's love:
Or fabling poets from Pieria's spring:
Their wanton and indecent legends bring."

ACHILLES, CHORUS.

Achilles. Where is the leader of the Grecian host?
Who of th' attendants tells him that Achilles,
The son of Peleus, seeks him at the gate?—
Different our state, who nigh the Euripus
Wait here: unwedded some, their houses left
In solitude, here sit upon the shore;
And childless others leave their nuptial beds;
Such ardour, not without the gods, through Greece
Flames for this war. What touches me to speak
Is mine: let others what their need requires
Themselves explain. Thessalia's pleasant fields
And Peleus leaving, at the narrow surge
Of Euripus I wait, the Myrmidons
Restraining: with impatient instance oft
They urge me, "Why, Achilles, stay we here?
What tedious length of time is yet to pass
To Ilium ere we sail? Wouldst thou do aught?
Do it, or lead us home; nor here await
The sons of Atreus, and their cold delays."

CLYTEMNESTRA, ACHILLES, CHORUS.

Clytem. Son of the goddess Thetis, in the house
Hearing thy words I come without the gates.
Achilles. O revered Modesty, whom do mine eyes
Behold? Her form bears dignity and grace.
Clytem. Not strange thou knowst us not, before not seen
But thy regard to Modesty I praise.
Achilles. Who art thou? To the Grecian camp why come,
A woman 'midst a host of men in arms?

Clytem. Daughter of Leda, Clytemnestra named,
Am I, the royal Agamemnon's wife.
Achilles. Well hast thou answered, and in brief: but shame
Were mine with wedded dames to hold discourse.
Clytem. Stay: wherefore dost thou fly me? With my hand
Join thy right hand, pledge of thy happy nuptials.
Achilles. My hand with thine! To Agamemnon this
Were wrong, if, what I have no right, I touch.
Clytem. Son of the sea-born Nereid, thou hast right,
Much right, since thou my daughter soon wilt wed.
Achilles. Wed, dost thou say? Amazement chains my tongue:
What secret purpose hath thy strange discourse?
Clytem. 'Tis ever thus: the modest, 'midst new friends,
At mention of their nuptials are ashamed.
Achilles. Ne'er did I woo thy daughter; ne'er did word
Of nuptials from th' Atridæ reach my ear.
Clytem. What may this mean? Thou wonderst at my words,
And equal wonder thine excite in me.
Achilles. All is conjecture, common to us both,
Both haply are by words alike deceived.
Clytem. I am abused, according nuptials here
Never designed, it seems; I blush at this.
Achilles. Some one perchance 'gainst thee and me hath framed
This mock. Regard it not; light let it pass.
Clytem. Farewell! I cannot look upon thy face,
Basely abused, and made a liar thus.
Achilles. Thee too I bid farewell: within the house
Inquiries from thy husband will I make.

ATTENDANT, CLYTEMNESTRA, ACHILLES, CHORUS.

Attend. Stay, stranger of the race of Æacus,
Stay, goddess-born: daughter of Leda, stay.
Achilles. Who from the gates calls with his earnest voice?
Attend. A slave: in that I boast not: no proud vaunt
My fortune will admit.
Achilles. Whose slave? Not mine:
For I with Agamemnon have no share.
Attend. Hers, who stands here before the house, the gift
Of Tyndarus her father.

Achilles. Well, we stay;
What wouldst thou? why hast thou detained me?
Speak.
Attend. Are you alone before this royal house?
Achilles. Speak as to us alone: come from the gates.
Attend. O fortune, and my provident caution, save
Those whom I wish to save!
Achilles. Thy words portend.
Something not brief, and seem of import high.
Clytem. Delay not for my hand: speak what thou wouldst.
Attend. Dost thou then know me, who I am, to thee
And to thy children how benevolent?
Clytem. I know thee, an old servant of my house.
Attend. And to the royal Agamemnon given
Part of thy dowry.
Clytem. With us didst thou come
To Argos, and hast there been always mine.
Attend. So is it: hence to thee I bear goodwill,
But to thy husband less.
Clytem. Well then, to me,
Whate'er thy wish to speak, at length disclose.
Attend. Thy daughter will her father slay, her father
With his own hand.
Clytem. How! I abhor thy words,
Old man: thou art not in thy perfect sense.
Attend. Striking her white neck with the ruthless sword.
Clytem. Unhappy me! Hath madness seized his mind?
Attend. No: save to thee and to thy daughter, sound
His sense: in this he errs from reason wide.
Clytem. What cause? What Fury fires him to the deed?
Attend. The Oracles, and Calchas, that the troops
May sail.
Clytem. Sail whither? Wretched me! She too
How wretched, whom her father will destroy!
Attend. To the proud seats of Troy, thence to bring back
Helen, the Spartan's wife.
Clytem. Of her return
Is Iphigenia doomed the fatal price?
Attend. E'en so: thy daughter will her father slay
A victim to Diana.
Clytem. From my home
To win me were these nuptials then devised.

Attend. Thy daughter that with pleasure thou mightst lead
To wed Achilles.
Clytem. To perdition then
Thou comst, my daughter, and thy mother with thee.
Attend. Piteous of both the suff'rings, and th' attempt
Of Agamemnon dreadful.
Clytem. With my woes
I sink, mine eye no longer holds the tear.
Attend. Painful the tear that falls for children lost.
Clytem. But whence, old man, knowst thou, or heardst thou this?
Attend. I took my way, charged with a letter to thee,
Since that which had been sent.
Clytem. Its purport what?
Forbidding, or exhorting me to bring
My daughter to her death?
Attend. This not to bring her
Gave charge: for wise were then thy husband's thoughts.
Clytem. Charged with this letter to me, why to me
Didst thou not give it?
Attend. Menelaus by force
Took it away, the author of these ills.
Clytem. Son of the sea-born Nereid, son of Peleus,
Dost thou hear this?
Achilles. What makes thee wretched, lady,
I hear: and ill what touches me I brook.
Clytem. My daughter they will slay, the false pretence
Thy nuptials.
Achilles. On thy husband I too charge
Much blame, nor light doth my resentment rise.
Clytem. Low at thy knees I will not blush to fall,
Of mortal birth to one of heavenly race.
Why should I now be proud? Or what demands,
More than a daughter's life, my anxious care?
Protect, O goddess-born, a wretched mother;
Protect a virgin called thy bride: her head
With garlands—ah, in vain!—yet did I crown,
And led her as by thee to be espoused;
Now to be slain I bring her: but on thee,
If thou protect her not, reproach will fall;
For, though not joined in marriage, thou wast called

The husband of the virgin. By this cheek,
By this right hand, by her that gave thee birth
(For me thy name hath ruined, and from thee
I therefore claim protection), I have now
No altar, but thy knee, to which to fly,
I have no friend but thee: the fell designs
Of Agamemnon's ruthless heart thou hearst;
And I, a woman, as thou seest, am come
To this unruly camp, in mischiefs bold,
Of use but when they list. If thou shalt dare
Stretch forth thine hand to aid me, I shall find
Safety: if not, then am I lost indeed.

Chorus. To be a mother is the amplest source
Of nature's dear affections: this to all
Is common, for their children anxious thought.

Achilles. To noblest thoughts my tow'ring soul is raised,
Which at the woes of others knows to melt,
And bear with moderation fortune's smiles.

Chorus. These are the men, who, trained in reason's lore,
As wisdom guides them, form their life aright.

Achilles. There is a time, when not to build too much
On our own wisdom is agreeable:
But then there is a time, when to exert
Our judgment is of use. By Chiron trained,
Of mortals the most righteous, I have learned
Simplicity of manners. To the sons
Of Atreus, when their high commands are stamped
With honour, my obedience shall be paid:
Where honour bids not, I shall not obey:
But my free nature here, and when at Troy,
Preserved, my spear shall to my utmost power
Add glory to the war. But thee, oppressed
With miseries, and by those most dear to thee,
Far as a young man may, so strong I feel
The touch of pity, thee will I protect;
And never shall thy daughter, who was called
Mine, by her father's hand be slain; to weave
His wily trains thy husband ne'er shall make
Me his pretext; for so my name would slay
Thy daughter, though it lifted not the sword.
The cause indeed thy husband; yet not pure
My person, if through me, and through my nuptials,

The virgin perish, suffering dreadful things
And wrongs, at which astonished nature starts.
I were the basest of the Greeks, a thing
Nought worth (and Menelaus might well be ranked
'Mongst men), no more the son of Peleus deemed,
But of some cruel demon, should my name,
Pleaded to screen thy husband's purpose, kill her.
By Nereus, who beneath the wat'ry waves
Was trained, the sire of Thetis, whence my birth,
The royal Agamemnon shall not touch
Thy daughter, with his finger shall not touch her,
Nor e'en her robes: else Sipylus, a mean
Barbaric town, from whence our chiefs derive
Their race, shall be illustrious, and my realm,
Phthia, be slighted as unknown to fame.
His lustral lavers and his salted cakes
With sorrow shall the prophet Calchas bear
Away. The prophet! What is he? A man
Who speaks 'mongst many falsehoods but few truths,
Whene'er chance leads him to speak true; when false,
The prophet is no more. With nuptial rites
Why should I say how many virgins sue
To be united to me? But of that
No more. The royal Agamemnon wrongs me,
Greatly he wrongs me: ought he not from me,
Would he betroth his daughter, ask my name?
Th' assent of Clytemnestra then with ease
Had I obtained to give her daughter to me.
I to the Greeks had given her, if to Troy
For this their course were checked; the public good
Of those with whom I join my arms t' exalt
I should not have refused: but with the chiefs
I now am nothing, held of no esteem
To act, or not to act, in glory's cause.
But soon this sword shall know whom, ere to Troy
I come, with drops of blood I shall distain,
Whoe'er he be that shall attempt to take
Thy daughter from me. Rest thou then in peace;
I, as a guardian god, am come to thee:
Great is the contest, yet it shall be proved.

Chorus. Worthy, O son of Peleus, of thyself,
Worthy the sea-born goddess, are thy words.

Clytem. How shall I praise thee, that due bounds my words
Exceed not, nor beneath thy merit sink,
Thy grace impairing: for the good, when praised,
Feel something of disgust, if to excess
Commended. But I blush at words that raise
Pity at private woes, whilst of my ills
No share is thine: yet lovely is the sight,
When, stranger though he be, to the distressed
A good man gives assistance. Pity me;
My suff'rings call for pity: when I thought
To have thee for a son, I fondly fed
A false and flatt'ring hope. To thee perchance,
And to thy future nuptials, this might be
An omen, should my daughter die; 'gainst this
Behoves thee guard. Well did thy words begin,
And well they ended: be it then thy will
My daughter shall be saved. Wilt thou she fall
A suppliant at thy knees? This ill becomes
A virgin; yet, if such thy will, with all
Her blushes shall she come, and in her eye
Ingenuous modesty: or the same grace
Shall I, if absent she, obtain from thee?

Achilles. Let her remain within: for Modesty
With her own modest dignity is pleased.

Clytem. Yet must we sue to thee with earnest prayer.

Achilles. Nor bring thy daughter, lady, to our sight,
Nor ours be rude reproach. Th' assembled host,
At leisure from their own domestic cares,
Loves the malignant jest and sland'rous tale.
Suppliant or not, alike shall you obtain
From me this grace: the contest shall be mine,
Great as it is, to free you from your ills.
Of one thing be assured, ne'er shall my tongue
Utter a falsehood: if I speak untruth,
And mock thee with vain promise, let me die:
But as I save thy daughter may I live.

Clytem. O be thou blest, thus aiding the unhappy!

Achilles. Now hear me, how success may best be ours.

Clytem. What wouldst thou? My attention thou mayst claim.

Achilles. The father's purpose let persuasion change.

Clytem. He, void of spirit, too much fears the host.

Achilles. Yet reason o'er the spiritless prevails.

Clytem. Small are my hopes: yet, say, what must I do?
Achilles. First, be a suppliant to him not to slay
His children: if rejected, come to me.
If thy entreaties win him, of my aid
There is no need: thy daughter's life is saved,
I with my friend shall be on better terms,
And nought of blame the army to my charge
Can then impute, if I by reason wish
T' effect my purpose, not by violence.
Well to thy warmest wish may this succeed,
And to thy friends', accomplished without me.
Clytem. How wise thy words! Whate'er to thee seems right
Shall be attempted. Should I not effect
The things I wish, where shall I see thee next,
Or whither bend my wretched steps to find
Thy hand, my firm protector 'gainst these ills?
Achilles. Far as occasion shall require, myself
Will be thy guard. But with disordered step
Let no one see thee hurrying through the throng
Of Grecians, nor disgrace thy father's house:
On Tyndarus unmerited would fall
Aught of ill fame, for he is great in Greece.
Clytem. It shall be so. Lead thou; on thee to wait
Me it behoves. If there are gods, on thee,
Just as thou art, their blessings must attend:
If not, to what effect is all our toil?

CHORUS.

Strophe.

What were the strains that Hymen gave to swell,
The Lybian pipe its warbles sweet
Attemp'ring to the chorded shell,
That loves to guide the mazy-winding feet,
Whilst the whisp'ring reed around
Breathes a soft responsive sound,
When to the feast of gods on Pelion's brow
The golden-sandalled Muses took their way,
Loose to the gale their beauteous tresses flow,
Thee, Peleus, gracing, and thy bridal day,
As they pierce the tangled grove,
O'er the mountain as they rove

Where the Centaur race reside,
Peleus and his lovely bride
They hail, and those wild scenes among
Pour the mellifluous song.
The Phrygian Ganymede of form divine,
A royal youth of Dardan race,
Advanced the feast of Jove to grace,
Poured from the glowing bowls the sparkling wine,
Fifty nymphs the white sands o'er,
Daughters they of Nereus hoar,
To the nuptials light advance,
And weave the circling dance.

Antistrophe.

The Centaurs waving high their spears of pine,
Their heads with grassy garlands crowned,
Came to the bowls, the feast divine,
Their hoofs swift-bounding o'er the rattling ground.
There the nymphs of Thessaly
Raised their tuneful voices high;
The prophet Phœbus joined the solemn strain,
And Chiron skilled to trace the Fates' decree.
"Daughter of Nereus," sung the raptured train,
"A son, bright beam of beauty, shall from thee
Draw his birth, who will advance,
Dreadful with his flaming lance,
With his Myrmidons that wield
Fierce in fight the spear and shield,
To th' illustrious realms of Troy,
And her proud towers destroy:
His manly limbs refulgent arms enfold;
Vulcan, at the mother's prayer,
Shall the glorious gift prepare,
And all the hero blaze in burnished gold."
Thus when Peleus won his bride,
Of the Nereid train the pride,
Came the gods in bright array
To grace their nuptial day.

Epode.

But thee, unhappy maid, thy head
With flow'ry garlands Greece shall crown;

As from the mountain cave's cool shade
Some beauteous heifer coming down,
Her neck no rude yoke knows, decreed
A victim at some shrine to bleed.
But now a human neck must bow,
And now the virgin's blood must flow,
Not trained the sylvan wilds among
To rustic pipe or pastoral song;
Her the fond mother decked with pride
As to some Grecian chief a bride.
The lovely form, the beauteous face,
And modest virtue's blushing grace
Avail no more: in evil hour
Impiety hath seized the power;
A slighted outcast Virtue fails,
Injustice o'er the laws prevails:
The common danger none descries,
Th' impending vengeance of the skies.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

Clytem. I am come forth, if haply I may see
My husband; long his absence since he left
The house. In tears is my unhappy daughter,
And heaves the frequent sigh, since she hath heard
The death to which her father destines her.
I spoke of one that is approaching nigh,
This Agamemnon, who will soon be found
Daring against his children impious deeds.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

Agam. Daughter of Leda, to my wish I find thee
Before the house, that from my daughter's ear
Apart I may speak words, which ill beseems
A virgin, soon to be a bride, to hear.
Clytem. What is it? Let not the occasion pass.
Agam. Send now thy daughter to her father's charge
Committed; for the lavers ready stand,
The salted cakes, which o'er the lustral fire
The hand must cast, the heifers too, whose blood
Must in black streams, before the nuptials, flow
To the chaste queen Diana, are prepared.

Clytem. Thy words indeed are gracious, but thy deeds
I know not, should I name them, how to praise.
Yet come thou forth, my daughter, for to thee
Are all thy father's purposes well known:
And bring thy brother, bring Orestes, wrapt
Close in thy vests, my child.—See, she is here
In prompt obedience to thee: what for her,
What for myself is meet, that shall I speak.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Agam. Why weeps my daughter? cheerful now no more
Thy look, nor pleasant: wherefore is thine eye
Fixed on the ground, thy robe before it held?
Iphig. Ah me! Whence first shall I begin to speak
My ills? For all in ills have found a first,
A last, a middle, and successive train.
Agam. Why is it that you all are drawn together,
With terror and confusion in your looks?
Clytem. Answer to what I ask with honest truth.
Agam. Speak freely: to be questioned is my wish.
Clytem. Thine and my daughter art thou bent to slay?
Agam. Ah, what a question! What suspicion this!
Clytem. To this without evasion answer first.
Agam. Ask what is meet, thou what is meet shalt hear.
Clytem. I ask this only; to this only speak.
Agam. O fate! O fortune! O my awful doom!
Clytem. And mine, and hers, one to us wretched three!
Agam. In what have I done wrong?
Clytem. Canst thou ask this
Of me? Thy purpose is unwise and ill.
Agam. I am undone: my secrets are betrayed.
Clytem. I have heard all, know all, which thou wouldst do
Against me: e'en thy silence and thy sighs
Confess it; labour not to give it words.
Agam. Lo, I am silent; for to misery
I should add shamelessness by speaking false.
Clytem. Now hear me, for my thoughts will I unfold
In no obscure and coloured mode of speech.
First then, for first with this will I upbraid thee,
Me didst thou wed against my will, and seize
By force; my former husband Tantalus

By thee was slain. By thee my infant son,
Torn from my breast by violence, was whirled
And dashed against the ground. The sons of Jove,
My brothers, glitt'ring on their steeds in arms
Advanced against thee; but old Tyndarus,
My father, saved thee, at his knees become
A supplicant; and hence didst thou obtain
My bed. To thee and to thy house my thoughts
Thus reconciled, thou shalt thyself attest
How irreproachable a wife I was,
How chaste, with what attention I increased
The splendour of thy house, that ent'ring there
Thou hadst delight, and going out, with thee
Went happiness along. A wife like this
Is a rare prize; the worthless are not rare.
Three daughters have I borne thee, and this son.
Of one of these wilt thou—O piercing grief!—
Deprive me. Should one ask thee, for what cause
Thy daughter wilt thou kill, what wouldst thou say?
Speak; or I must speak for thee! E'en for this,
That Menelaus may regain Helena.
Well would it be, if, for his wanton wife
Our children made the price, what most we hate
With what is dearest to us we redeem.
But if thou lead the forces, leaving me
At Argos, should thy absence then be long,
Think what my heart must feel, when in the house
I see the seats all vacant of my child,
And her apartment vacant: I shall sit
Alone, in tears, thus ever wailing her:
"Thy father, O my child, hath slain thee; he
That gave thee birth, hath killed thee, not another,
Nor by another hand; this is the prize
He left his house." But do not, by the gods,
Do not compel me to be aught but good
To thee, nor be thou aught but good to me;
Since there will want a slight pretence alone
For me, and for my daughters left at home,
To welcome, as becomes us, thy return.
Well, thou wilt sacrifice thy child: what vows
Wilt thou then form? what blessing wilt thou ask
To wait thee, thou, who dost thy daughter slay—

Thou, who with shame to this unlucky war
Art marching? Is it just that I should pray
For aught of good to thee? Should I not deem
The gods unwise, if they their favours shower
On those who stain their willing hands with blood?
Wilt thou, to Argos when returned, embrace
Thy children? But thou hast no right: thy face
Which of thy children will behold, if one
With cool deliberate purpose thou shalt kill?
Now to this point I come: if thee alone
To bear the sceptre, thee to lead the troops
Th' occasion called, shouldst thou not thus have urged
Thy just appeal to Greece: "Is it your will,
Ye Grecians, to the Phrygian shores to sail?
Cast then the lot whose daughter must be slain."
This had at least been equal; nor hadst thou
Been singled out from all to give thy child
A victim for the Greeks. Or Menelaus,
Whose cause this is, should for the mother slay
Hermione: but I, who to thy bed
Am faithful, of my child shall be deprived,
And she, that hath misdone, at her return
To Sparta her young daughter shall bear back,
And thus be happy. Aught if I have said
Amiss, reply to that: but if my words
Speak nought but sober reason, do not slay
Thy child, and mine: and thus thou wilt be wise.

Chorus. Be thou persuaded: reason bids preserve
Our children: this no mortal can gainsay.

Iphig. Had I, my father, the persuasive voice
Of Orpheus, and his skill to charm the rocks
To follow me, and soothe whome'er I please
With winning words, I would make trial of it;
But I have nothing to present thee now
Save tears, my only eloquence; and those
I can present thee. On thy knees I hang,
A suppliant wreath, this body, which she bore
To thee. Ah! kill me not in youth's fresh prime.
Sweet is the light of heaven; compel me not
What is beneath to view. I was the first
To call thee father, me thou first didst call
Thy child; I was the first that on thy knees

Fondly caressed thee, and from thee received
The fond caress; this was thy speech to me:
"Shall I, my child, e'er see thee in some house
Of splendour, happy in thy husband, live,
And flourish, as becomes my dignity?"
My speech to thee was, leaning 'gainst thy cheek,
Which with my hand I now caress: "And what
Shall I then do for thee? Shall I receive
My father when grown old, and in my house
Cheer him with each fond office, to repay
The careful nurture which he gave my youth?"
These words are on my memory deep impressed;
Thou hast forgot them, and wilt kill thy child.
By Pelops I entreat thee, by thy sire
Atreus, by this my mother, who before
Suffered for me the pangs of childbirth, now
These pangs again to suffer, do not kill me.
If Paris be enamoured of his bride,
His Helen, what concerns it me? and how
Comes he to my destruction? Look upon me,
Give me a smile, give me a kiss, my father,
That, if my words persuade thee not, in death
I may have this memorial of thy love.
My brother, small assistance canst thou give
Thy friends, yet for thy sister with thy tears
Implore thy father that she may not die:
E'en infants have a sense of ills: and see,
My father, silent though he be, he sues
To thee: be gentle to me, on my life
Have pity. Thy two children by this beard
Entreat thee, thy dear children: one is yet
An infant, one to riper years arrived.
I will sum all in this, which shall contain
More than long speech: To view the light of life
To mortals is most sweet, but all beneath
Is nothing: of his senses is he reft
Who hath a wish to die; for life, though ill,
Excels whate'er there is of good in death.

Chorus. For thee, unhappy Helen, and thy love,
A contest dreadful, and surcharged with woes,
To the Atridæ and their children comes.

Agam. What calls for pity, and what not, I know:

I love my children, else I should be void
Of reason: to dare this is dreadful to me,
And not to dare is dreadful. I perforce
Must do it. What a naval camp is here
You see, how many kings of Greece arrayed
In glitt'ring arms: to Ilium's towers are these
Denied t' advance, unless I offer thee
A victim, thus the prophet Calchas speaks,
Denied from her foundations to o'erturn
Illustrious Troy; and through the Grecian host
Maddens the fierce desire to sail with speed
'Gainst the Barbarians' land, and check their rage
For Grecian dames. My daughters these will slay
At Argos, you too will they slay, and me,
Should I, the goddess not revering, make
Of none effect her oracle. To this
Not Menelaus, my child, hath wrought my soul,
Nor to his will am I a slave; but Greece,
For which will I, or will I not, perforce
Thee I must sacrifice: my weakness here
I feel, and must submit. In thee, my child,
What lies, and what in me, Greece should be free,
Nor should her sons beneath Barbarians bend,
Their nuptial beds to ruffian force a prey.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Clytem. Alas, my child! O strangers! Wretched me,
How wretched in thy death! Thy father flies thee;
He flies, but dooms thee to the realms beneath.
Iphig. My mother, O my mother! Wretched me!
For both our fortunes, full of woe,
One strain, one mournful strain shall flow.
No more the gladsome light of day,
No more the bright sun's golden ray
Shall shine, ah me! to cheer my child.
Ah me! Ye Phrygian forests wild,
Ye snow-clad mountains, rude that rise,
Mountains of Ida to the skies;
Where Priam once his son unblest,
Far severed from his mother's breast,
Exposed, this Paris to destroy;
Idæus thence they called the boy;

The boy they called Idæus, known
So named through all the Phrygian town.
O that his son he ne'er had laid
Where with their herds the herdsmen strayed,
The fountains of the nymphs among,
Where roll the lucid streams along,
And the green mead profusely pours
The blushing glow of roseate flowers,
With hyacinths of dusky hue,
For goddesses which lovely grew.
Once Pallas came to those sweet glades,
And Juno deigned to grace their shades,
And Venus fraught with wanton wiles,
Resistless with enchanting smiles,
And Hermes, messenger of Jove.
Venus in all the sweets of love
Rejoicing, Pallas in her spear,
And proud the bed of Jove to share,
Juno's bright form, imperial dame,
Once to the odious judgment came:
For beauty and for beauty's prize
This contest drew them from the skies,
But death on me: yet Greece shall own
My death assures her high renown.

Chorus. Diana hath accepted thee the first
Of victims, that our arms may sail to Troy.

Iphig. But he, to whom my birth I owe,
Betrays and flies me 'midst my woe.
My mother! Ah my cruel fate!
He flies, and leaves me desolate.
Ill-omened Helena, thy love
Fatal, will fatal to me prove:
I die, I perish, I am slain,
My blood th' unhallowed sword shall stain
Unhallowed is my father's hand,
That pours it on th' empurpled sand.
O, had the ships ne'er ploughed their way
To Aulis, to this winding bay!
O, had Jove given the fleet to bear
To Troy's proud shores the wafted war;
Not adverse winds, that sullen sweep
Across Eubœa's angry deep!

To some he grants the fav'ring gales
That wanton in their flying sails;
Necessity to some and pain;
To some to cut the azure main;
These quit the port with gallant pride,
Reluctant those at anchor ride.
To suff'rings born the human race,
In suff'rings pass life's little space:
Why since misfortunes 'round them wait,
Should men invite their cruel fate?

Chorus. Alas, what woes, what miseries hath thou brought,
Daughter of Tyndarus, on Greece! But thee,
Unhappy virgin, by this flood of ills
O'erwhelmed I wail. Ah, were this fate not thine!

Iphig. My mother, what a crowd of men I see
Advance!

Clytem. The son of Thetis with them comes,
For whom, my child, I led thee to this strand.

Iphig. Open the doors to me, ye female train,
That I may hide myself.

Clytem. Whom dost thou fly?

Iphig. Achilles, whom I blush to see.

Clytem. And why?

Iphig. These ill-starred nuptials cover me with shame.

Clytem. Nothing of pleasure doth thy state present.
Yet stay: this is no time for grave reserve.

ACHILLES, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Achilles. Daughter of Leda, O unhappy queen!

Clytem. Thy voice speaks nothing false.

Achilles. Among the Greeks
Dreadful the clamour.

Clytem. What the clamour? Say.

Achilles. Touching thy daughter.

Clytem. Thou hast said what bears
No happy omen

Achilles. That she must be slain
A victim.

Clytem. And doth none against this speak?

Achilles. I was with outrage threatened.

Clytem. Stranger, how?

Achilles. To be o'erwhelmed with stones.
Clytem. Whilst thou wouldst save
My child?
Achilles. E'en so.
Clytem. Who dared to touch thee?
Achilles. All
The Grecians.
Clytem. Were thy troops of Myrmidons
Not present to thee?
Achilles. They were first in rage.
Clytem. Then are we lost, my child.
Achilles. They cried aloud
That I was vanquished by a woman.
Clytem. Aught
Didst thou reply?
Achilles. That her, who was to be
My bride, they should not slay.
Clytem. With justice urged.
Achilles. Named by her father mine.
Clytem. From Argos brought
By his command.
Achilles. In vain: I was o'erpowered
By their rude cries.
Clytem. The many are indeed
A dreadful ill.
Achilles. Yet I will give thee aid.
Clytem. Wilt thou alone fight with a host?
Achilles. Thou seest
These bearing arms.
Clytem. May thy designs succeed!
Achilles. They shall succeed.
Clytem. Shall not my child be slain?
Achilles. Never by my permission.
Clytem. Will none come
To lay rude hands upon the virgin?
Achilles. Many:
Ulysses with them; he will lead her.
Clytem. What,
He of the race of Sisyphus?
Achilles. The same.
Clytem. Comes he of his free will, or by the host
Appointed?

Achilles. Chosen, by his own consent.
Clytem. Bad choice, to be with blood polluted.
Achilles. Him
Will I keep from her.
Clytem. Would he drag her hence
Against her will?
Achilles. E'en by her golden locks.
Clytem. What now behoves me do?
Achilles. Be firm, and hold
Thy daughter back.
Clytem. And shall she not be slain
For that?
Achilles. But he will surely come for this.
Iphig. My mother, hear ye now my words: for thee
Offended with thy husband I behold.
Vain anger! for where force will take its way,
To struggle is not easy. Our warm thanks
Are to this stranger for his prompt goodwill
Most justly due; yet, it behoves thee, see
Thou art not by the army charged with blame;
Nothing the more should we avail, on him
Mischief would fall. Hear then what to my mind
Deliberate thought presents. It is decreed
For me to die: this then I wish, to die
With glory, all reluctance banished far.
My mother, weigh this well, that what I speak
Is honour's dictate. All the powers of Greece
Have now their eyes on me; on me depends
The sailing of the fleet, the fall of Troy,
And not to suffer, should a new attempt
Be dared, the rude Barbarians from blest Greece
To bear in future times her dames by force,
This ruin bursting on them for the loss
Of Helena, whom Paris bore away.
By dying all these things shall I achieve,
And blest, for that I have delivered Greece,
Shall be my fame. To be too fond of life
Becomes not me; nor for thyself alone,
But to all Greece a blessing, didst thou bear me.
Shall thousands, when their country's injured, lift
Their shields, shall thousands grasp the oar, and dare,
Advancing bravely 'gainst the foe, to die

For Greece? And shall my life, my single life,
Obstruct all this? Would this be just? What word
Can we reply? Nay more; it is not right
That he with all the Grecians should contend
In fight, should die, and for a woman. No;
More than a thousand women is one man
Worthy to see the light of life. If me
The chaste Diana wills t' accept, shall I,
A mortal, dare oppose her heavenly will?
Vain the attempt: for Greece I give my life.
Slay me, demolish Troy: for these shall be
Long time my monuments, my children these,
My nuptials, and my glory. It is meet
That Greece should o'er Barbarians bear the sway,
Not that Barbarians lord it over Greece:
Nature hath formed them slaves, the Grecians free.

Chorus. Thine, royal virgin, is a generous part:
But harsh what Fortune and the Goddess wills.

Achilles. Daughter of Agamemnon, highly blest
Some god would make me, if I might attain
Thy nuptials. Greece in thee I happy deem,
And thee in Greece. This hast thou nobly spoken,
And worthy of thy country: to contend
Against a goddess of superior power
Desisting, thou hast judged the public good
A better, nay, a necessary part.
For this more ardent my desire to gain thee
My bride, this disposition when I see,
For it is generous. But consider well:
To do thee good, to lead thee to my house,
Is my warm wish; and much I should be grieved,
Be witness Thetis, if I save thee not
In arms against the Grecians. In thy thought
Revolve this well: death is a dreadful thing.

Iphig. Reflecting not on any this I speak,
Enough of wars and slaughters from the charms
Of Helen rise: but die not thou for me,
O stranger, nor distain thy sword with blood;
But let me save my country, if I may.

Achilles. O glorious spirit! Nought have I 'gainst this
To urge, since such thy will; for what thou sayst
Is generous: why should not the truth be spoken?

But of thy purpose thou mayst yet repent.
Know then my resolution: I will go,
And nigh the altar place these arms, thy death
Preventing, not permitting: thou perchance
Mayst soon approve my purpose, nigh thy throat
When thou shalt see the sword: and for that cause
I will not, for a rash unweighed resolve,
Abandon thee to die; but with these arms
Wait near Diana's temple till thou come.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Iphig. Why, mother, dost thou shed these silent tears?
Clytem. I have a cruel cause, that rends my heart.
Iphig. Forbear, nor sink my spirit. Grant me this.
Clytem. Say what: by me my child shall ne'er be wronged.
Iphig. Clip not those crispéd tresses from thine head,
Nor robe thee in the sable garb of woe.
Clytem. What hast thou said, my child? When thou art lost——
Iphig. Not lost, but saved: through me thou shalt be famed.
Clytem. What, for thy death shall I not mourn, my child?
Iphig. No, since for me a tomb shall not be raised.
Clytem. To die then, is not that to be entombed?
Iphig. The altar of the goddess is my tomb.
Clytem. Well dost thou speak, my child: I will comply.
Iphig. And deem me blest, as working good to Greece.
Clytem. What message to thy sisters shall I bear?
Iphig. Them too array not in the garbs of woe.
Clytem. What greetings to the virgins dost thou send?
Iphig. My last farewell. To manhood train Orestes.
Clytem. Embrace him, for thou ne'er shalt see him more.
Iphig. Far as thou couldst, thou didst assist thy friends.
[*To Orestes.*
Clytem. At Argos can I do aught pleasing to thee?
Iphig. My father, and thy husband, do not hate.
Clytem. For thy dear sake fierce contests must he bear.
Iphig. For Greece, reluctant, me to death he yields.
Clytem. Basely, with guile, unworthy Atreus' son.
Iphig. Who goes with me, and leads me, by the hair
Ere I am dragged?
Clytem. I will go with thee.

Iphig. No:
That were unseemly.
Clytem. Hanging on thy robes.
Iphig. Let me prevail, my mother; stay. To me
As more becoming this, and more to thee.
Let one of these, th' attendants of my father,
Conduct me to Diana's hallowed mead,
Where I shall fall a victim.
Clytem. O my child,
Dost thou then go?
Iphig. And never to return.
Clytem. And wilt thou leave thy mother?
Iphig. As thou seest,
Not as I merit.
Clytem. Stay, forsake me not.
Iphig. I suffer not a tear to fall. But you,
Ye virgins, to my fate attune the hymn,
"Diana, daughter of almighty Jove."
With fav'ring omens sing "Success to Greece."
Come, with the basket one begin the rites,
One with the purifying cakes the flames
Enkindle; let my father his right hand
Place on the altar; for I come to give
Safety to Greece, and conquest to her arms.
Lead me: mine the glorious fate
To o'erturn the Phrygian state;
Ilium's towers their head shall bow.
With the garlands bind my brow,
Bring them, be these tresses crowned.
Round the shrine, the altar round
Bear the lavers, which you fill
From the pure translucent rill.
High your choral voices raise,
Tuned to hymn Diana's praise,
Blest Diana, royal maid.
Since the fates demand my aid,
I fulfil their awful power
By my slaughter, by my gore.
Chorus. Reverenced, reverenced mother, now
Thus for thee our tears shall flow:
For unhallowed would a tear
'Midst the solemn rites appear.

Iphig. Swell the notes, ye virgin train,
To Diana swell the strain,
Queen of Chalcis, adverse land,
Queen of Aulis, on whose strand,
Winding to a narrow bay,
Fierce to take its angry way
Waits the war, and calls on me
Its retarded force to free.
O my country, where these eyes
Opened on Pelasgic skies!
O ye virgins, once my pride,
In Mycenæ who reside!

Chorus. Why of Perseus name the town,
Which Cyclopean rampires crown?

Iphig. Me you reared a beam of light
Freely now I sink in night.

Chorus. And for this immortal fame,
Virgin, shall attend thy name.

Iphig. Ah, thou beaming lamp of day,
Jove-born, bright, ethereal ray,
Other regions me await,
Other life, and other fate!
Farewell, beauteous lamp of day,
Farewell, bright ethereal ray!

Chorus. See, she goes: her glorious fate
To o'erturn the Phrygian state;
Soon the wreaths shall bind her brow;
Soon the lustral waters flow;
Soon that beauteous neck shall feel
Piercing deep the fatal steel,
And the ruthless altar o'er
Sprinkle drops of gushing gore.
By thy father's dread command
There the cleansing lavers stand;
There in arms the Grecian powers
Burn to march 'gainst Ilium's towers.
But our voices let us raise,
Tuned to hymn Diana's praise,
Virgin daughter she of Jove,
Queen among the gods above.
That with conquest and renown
She the arms of Greece may crown.

To thee, dread power, we make our vows,
Pleased when the blood of human victims flows.
To Phrygia's hostile strand,
Where rise perfidious Ilium's hated towers,
Waft, O waft the Grecian powers,
And aid this martial band!
On Agamemnon's honoured head,
Whilst wide the spears of Greece their terrors spread,
Th' immortal crown let conquest place,
With glory's brightest grace.

MESSENGER, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

Mess. O royal Clytemnestra, from the house
Hither advance, that thou mayst hear my words.
Clytem. Hearing thy voice I come, but with affright
And terror trembling, lest thy coming bring
Tidings of other woes, beyond what now
Afflict me.
Mess. Of thy daughter have I things
Astonishing and awful to relate.
Clytem. Delay not then, but speak them instantly.
Mess. Yes, honoured lady, thou shalt hear them all
Distinct from first to last, if that my sense
Disordered be not faithless to my tongue.
When to Diana's grove and flow'ry meads
We came, where stood th' assembled host of Greece.
Leading thy daughter, straight in close array
Was formed the band of Argives; but the chief
Imperial Agamemnon, when he saw
His daughter as a victim to the grove
Advancing, groaned, and bursting into tears
Turned from the sight his head, before his eyes
Holding his robe. The virgin near him stood,
And thus addressed him: "Father, I to thee
Am present: for my country, and for all
The land of Greece, I freely give myself
A victim: to the altar let them lead me,
Since such the oracle. If aught on me
Depends, be happy, and attain the prize
Of glorious conquest, and revisit safe
Your country: of the Grecians for this cause

Let no one touch me; with intrepid spirit
Silent will I present my neck." She spoke,
And all that heard admired the noble soul
And virtue of the virgin. In the midst
Talthybius standing, such his charge, proclaimed
Silence to all the host: and Calchas now,
The prophet, in the golden basket placed
Drawn from its sheath the sharp-edged sword, and bound
The sacred garlands round the virgin's head.
The son of Peleus, holding in his hands
The basket and the laver, circled round
The altar of the goddess, and thus spoke:
"Daughter of Jove, Diana, in the chase
Of savage beasts delighting, through the night
Who rollest thy resplendent orb, accept
This victim, which th' associate troops of Greece,
And Agamemnon, our imperial chief,
Present to thee, the unpolluted blood
Now from this beauteous virgin's neck to flow.
Grant that secure our fleets may plough the main,
And that our arms may lay the rampired walls
Of Troy in dust." The sons of Atreus stood,
And all the host fixed on the ground their eyes.
The priest then took the sword, preferred his prayer,
And with his eye marked where to give the blow.
My heart with grief sunk in me, on the earth
Mine eyes were cast; when sudden to the view
A wonder! For the stroke each clearly heard,
But where the virgin was none knew. Aloud
The priest exclaims, and all the host with shouts
Rifted the air, beholding from some god
A prodigy, which struck their wond'ring eyes,
Surpassing faith when seen: for on the ground
Panting was laid a hind of largest bulk,
In form excelling; with its spouting blood
Much was the altar of the goddess dewed.
Calchas at this, think with what joy, exclaimed:
"Ye leaders of th' united host of Greece,
See you this victim, by the goddess brought,
And at her altar laid, a mountain hind?
This, rather than the virgin, she accepts,

Not with the rich stream of her noble blood
To stain the altar; this she hath received
Of her free grace, and gives a fav'ring gale
To swell our sails, and bear th' invading war
To Ilium: therefore rouse, ye naval train,
Your courage. To your ships! for we this day,
Leaving the deep recesses of this shore,
Must pass th' Ægean sea." Soon as the flames
The victim had consumed, he poured a prayer,
That o'er the waves the host might plough their way.
Me Agamemnon sends, that I should bear
To thee these tidings, and declare what fate
The gods assign him, and through Greece t' obtain
Immortal glory. What I now relate
I saw, for I was present; to the gods
Thy daughter, be thou well assured, is fled.
Therefore lament no more, no more retain
Thy anger 'gainst thy lord: to mortal men
Things unexpected oft the gods dispense,
And whom they love they save: this day hath seen
Thy daughter dead, seen her alive again.

Chorus. His tidings with what transport do I hear!
Thy daughter lives, and lives among the gods.

Clytem. And have the gods, my daughter, borne thee hence?
How then shall I address thee? Or of this
How deem! Vain words, perchance, to comfort me
And soothe to peace the anguish of my soul.

Mess. But Agamemnon comes, and will confirm
Each circumstance which thou hast heard from me.

Agam. Lady, we have much cause to think ourselves,
Touching our daughter, blest: for 'mongst the gods
Commercing she in truth resides. But thee
Behoves it with thine infant son return
To Argos, for the troops with ardour haste
To sail. And now farewell! My greetings to thee
From Troy will be unfrequent, and at times
Of distant interval: mayst thou be blest!

Chorus. With joy, Atrides, reach the Phrygian shore;
With joy return to Greece, and bring with thee
Bright conquest, and the glorious spoils of Troy!

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

Iphigenia.	Thoas.
Orestes.	Herdsman.
Pylades.	Messenger.

Chorus of Grecian Women, Captives, Attendants on Iphigenia in the Temple.

Iphigenia.

To Pisa by the fleetest coursers borne
Comes Pelops, son of Tantalus, and weds
The virgin daughter of Œnomaus:
From her sprung Atreus; Menelaus from him,
And Agamemnon; I from him derive
My birth, his Iphigenia, by his queen
Daughter of Tyndarus. Where frequent winds
Swell the vext Euripus with eddying blasts,
And roll the dark'ning waves, my father slew me
A victim to Diana, so he thought,
For Helen's sake, its bay where Aulis winds
To fame well known, for there his thousand ships,
Th' armament of Greece, th' imperial chief
Convened, desirous that his Greeks should snatch
The glorious crown of victory from Troy,
And punish the base insult to the bed
Of Helen, vengeance grateful to the soul
Of Menelaus. But 'gainst his ships the sea
Long barred, and not one fav'ring breeze to swell
His flagging sails, the hallowed flames the chief
Consults, and Calchas thus disclosed the fates:
"Imperial leader of the Grecian host,
Hence shalt thou not unmoor thy vessels ere
Diana as a victim shall receive
Thy daughter Iphigenia. What the year

Most beauteous should produce, thou to the queen
Dispensing light didst vow to sacrifice:
A daughter Clytemnestra in thy house
Then bore (the peerless grace of beauty thus
To me assigning): her must thou devote
The victim." Then Ulysses by his arts
Me, to Achilles as designed a bride,
Won from my mother. My unhappy fate
To Aulis brought me; on the altar there
High was I placed, and o'er me gleamed the sword
Aiming the fatal wound: but from the stroke
Diana snatched me, in exchange a hind
Giving the Grecians; through the lucid air
Me she conveyed to Tauris, here to dwell,
Where o'er barbarians a barbaric king
Holds his rude sway, named Thoas, whose swift foot
Equals the rapid wing: me he appoints
The priestess of this temple, where such rites
Are pleasing to Diana, that the name
Alone claims honour; for I sacrifice
(Such, ere I came, the custom of the state)
Whatever Grecian to this savage shore
Is driven. The previous rites are mine; the deed
Of blood, too horrid to be told, devolves
On others in the temple; but the rest,
In reverence to the goddess, I forbear.
But the strange visions, which the night now past
Brought with it, to the air, if that may soothe
My troubled thought, I will relate. I seemed,
As I lay sleeping, from this land removed
To dwell at Argos, resting on my couch
'Midst the apartments of the virgin train.
Sudden the firm earth shook; I fled, and stood
Without; the battlements I saw, and all
The rocking roof fall from its lofty height
In ruins to the ground; of all the house,
My father's house, one pillar, as I thought,
Alone was left, which from its cornice waved
A length of auburn-locks, and human voice
Assumed. The bloody office, which is mine
To strangers here, respecting, I to death,
Sprinkling the lustral drops, devoted it

With many tears. My dream I thus expound.
Orestes, whom I hallowed by my rites,
Is dead: for sons are pillars of the house,
They, whom my lustral lavers sprinkle, die.
I cannot to my friends apply my dream,
For Strophius, when I perished, had no son.
Now to my brother, absent though he be,
Libations will I offer; this at least,
With the attendants given me by the king,
Virgins of Greece, I can: but what the cause
They yet attend me not within the house,
The temple of the goddess where I dwell?

ORESTES, PYLADES.

Orestes. Keep careful watch, lest some one come this way.
Pylades. I watch, and turn mine eye to every part.
Orestes. And dost thou, Pylades, imagine this
The temple of the goddess which we seek,
Our sails from Argos sweeping o'er the main?
Pylades. Orestes, such my thought, and must be thine.
Orestes. And this the altar wet with Grecian blood?
Pylades. Crimsoned with gore behold its sculptured wreaths.
Orestes. See, from the battlements what trophies hang!
Pylades. The spoils of strangers that have here been slain.
Orestes. Behoves us then to watch with careful eye.
O Phœbus, by thy oracles again
Why hast thou led me to these toils? E'er since
In vengeance for my father's blood I slew
My mother, ceaseless by the Furies driven,
Vagrant, an outcast, many a bending course
My feet have trod: to thee I came, of thee
Inquired this whirling frenzy by what means,
And by what means my labours I might end.
Thy voice commanded me to speed my course
To this wild coast of Tauris, where a shrine
Thy sister hath, Diana; thence to take
The statue of the goddess, which from heaven,
So say the natives, to this temple fell:
This image or by fraud or fortune won,
The dangerous toil achieved, to place the prize
In the Athenian land: no more was said;

But that performing this I should obtain
Rest from my toils. Obedient to thy words
On this unknown, unhospitable coast
Am I arrived. Now, Pylades, for thou
Art my associate in this dangerous task,
Of thee I ask, What shall we do? for high
The walls, thou seest, which fence the temple round:
Shall we ascend their height? But how escape
Observing eyes? Or burst the brazen bars?
Of these we nothing know. In the attempt
To force the gates, or meditating means
To enter, if detected, we shall die.
Shall we then, ere we die, by flight regain
The ship, in which we hither ploughed the sea?

Pylades. Of flight we brook no thought, nor such hath been
Our wont; nor may the god's commanding voice
Be disobeyed: but from the temple now
Retiring, in some cave, which the black sea
Beats with its billows, we may lie concealed
At distance from our bark, lest some, whose eyes
May note it, bear the tidings to the king,
And we be seized by force. But when the eye
Of night comes darkling on, then must we dare,
And take the polished image from the shrine,
Attempting all things: and the vacant space
Between the triglyphs, mark it well, enough
Is open to admit us; by that way
Attempt we to descend. In toils the brave
Are daring; of no worth the abject soul.

Orestes. This length of sea we ploughed not from this coast,
Nothing effected, to return: but well
Hast thou advised; the god must be obeyed.
Retire we then where we may lie concealed:
For never from the god will come the cause
That what his sacred voice commands should fall
Effectless. We must dare. No toil to youth
Excuse, which justifies inaction, brings.

IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Iphig. You, who your savage dwellings hold
Nigh this inhospitable main,

'Gainst clashing rocks with fury rolled,
From all but hallowed words abstain.
Virgin queen, Latona's grace,
Joying in the mountain chase,
To thy court, thy rich domain,
To thy beauteous-pillared fane,
Where our wond'ring eyes behold
Battlements that blaze with gold,
Thus my virgin steps I bend,
Holy, the holy to attend,
Servant, virgin queen, to thee,
Power, who bearst life's golden key,
Far from Greece for steeds renowned,
From her walls with towers crowned,
From the beauteous-planted meads
Where his train Eurotas leads,
Visiting the loved retreats
Once my royal father's seats.

Chorus. I come. What cares disturb thy rest?
Why hast thou brought me to the shrine?
Doth some fresh grief afflict thy breast?
Why bring me to this seat divine?
Thou daughter of that chief, whose powers
Ploughed with a thousand keels the strand,
And ranged in arms shook Troy's proud towers
Beneath th' Atridæ's great command!

Iphig. O ye attendant train,
How is my heart oppressed with woe!
What notes, save notes of grief, can flow,
A harsh and unmelodious strain?
My soul domestic ills oppress with dread,
And bid me mourn a brother dead.
What visions did my sleeping sense appal
In the past dark and midnight hour?
'Tis ruin, ruin all.
My father's house—it is no more;
No more is his illustrious line.
What dreadful deeds hath Argos known!
One only brother, Fate, was mine;
And dost thou rend him from me? Is he gone
To Pluto's dreary realms below?
For him, as dead, with pious care

This goblet I prepare;
And on the bosom of the earth shall flow
Streams from the heifer mountain-bred,
The grape's rich juice, and mixed with these
The labour of the yellow bees,
Libations soothing to the dead.
Give me th' oblation; let me hold
The foaming goblet's hallowed gold.

O thou, the earth beneath,
Who didst from Agamemnon spring,
To thee deprived of vital breath
I these libations bring.
Accept them: to thy honoured tomb
Never, ah! never shall I come;
Never these golden tresses bear
To place them there, there shed the tear:
For from my country far, a hind
There deemed as slain, my wild abode I find.

Chorus. To thee thy faithful train
The Asiatic hymn will raise,
A doleful, a barbaric strain,
Responsive to thy lays,
And steep in tears the mournful song,
Notes which to the dead belong,
Dismal notes attuned to woe
By Pluto in the realms below:
No sprightly air shall we employ
To cheer the soul, and wake the sense of joy.

Iphig. Th' Atridæ are no more:
Extinct their sceptre's golden light;
My father's house from its proud height
Is fall'n: its ruins I deplore.
Who of her kings at Argos holds his reign,
Her kings once blest? But Sorrow's train
Rolls on impetuous for the rapid steeds
Which o'er the strand with Pelops fly.
From what atrocious deeds
Starts the sun back, his sacred eye
Of brightness, loathing, turned aside?
And fatal to their house arose
From the rich Ram, Thessalia's golden pride,

Slaughter on slaughter, woes on woes.
Thence from the dead of ages past
Vengeance came rushing on its prey,
And swept the race of Tantalus away:
Fatal to thee its ruthless haste;
To me too fatal from the hour
My mother wedded, from the night
She gave me to life's opening light,
Nursed by affliction's cruel power.
Early to me the fates unkind
To know what sorrow is assigned;
Me, Leda's daughter, hapless dame,
First blooming offspring of her bed
(A father's conduct here I blame),
A joyless victim bred;
When o'er the strand of Aulis, in the pride
Of beauty kindling flames of love,
High on my splendid car I move,
Betrothed to Thetis' son a bride:
Ah hapless bride, to all the train
Of Grecian fair preferred in vain!
But now a stranger on this strand,
'Gainst which the wild waves beat,
I hold my dreary, joyless seat,
Far distant from my native land;
Nor nuptial bed is mine, nor child, nor friend.
At Argos now no more I raise
The festal song in Juno's praise;
Nor o'er the loom sweet-sounding bend,
As the creative shuttle flies,
Give forms of Titans fierce to rise,
And dreadful with her purple spear
Image Athenian Pallas there.
But on this barb'rous shore
Th' unhappy stranger's fate I moan,
The ruthless altar stained with gore,
His deep and dying groan:
And for each tear that weeps his woes,
From me a tear of pity flows.
Of these the sad remembrance now must sleep:
A brother dead, ah me! I weep:
At Argos him by fate opprest

I left an infant at the breast.
A beauteous bud, whose opening charms
Then blossomed in his mother's arms,
Orestes, born to high command,
Th' imperial sceptre of the Argive land.

Chorus. Leaving the sea-washed shore a herdsman comes
Speeding, with some fresh tidings to thee fraught.

HERDSMAN, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Herd. Daughter of Agamemnon, and bright gem
Of Clytemnestra, hear strange things from me.

Iphig. And what of terror doth thy tale import?

Herd. Two youths, swift-rowing 'twixt the clashing rocks
Of our wild sea, are landed on the beach;
A grateful offering at Diana's shrine,
And victims to the goddess. Haste, prepare
The sacred lavers and the previous rites.

Iphig. Whence are the strangers? from what country named?

Herd. From Greece: this only, nothing more, I know.

Iphig. Didst thou not hear what names the strangers bear?

Herd. One by the other was called Pylades.

Iphig. How is the stranger, his companion, named?

Herd. This none of us can tell: we heard it not.

Iphig. How saw you them? how seized them? by what chance?

Herd. 'Midst the rude cliffs that o'er the Euxine hang——

Iphig. And what concern have herdsmen with the sea?

Herd. To wash our herds in the salt wave we came.

Iphig. To what I asked return: how seized you them?
Tell me the manner; this I wish to know.
For slow the victims come, nor hath some while
The altar of the goddess, as was wont,
Been crimsoned with the streams of Grecian blood.

Herd. Our herds, which in the forests feed, we drove
Amidst the tide that rushes to the shore
'Twixt the Symplegades: it was the place
Where in the rifted rock the chafing surge
Hath hollowed a rude cave, the haunt of those
Whose quest is purple. Of our number there
A herdsman saw two youths, and back returned

With soft and silent step; then pointing said,
"Do you not see them? These are deities
That sit there." One, who with religious awe
Revered the gods, with hands uplifted prayed,
His eyes fixed on them: "Son of the sea-nymph
Leucothoe, guardian of the lab'ring bark,
Our Lord Palæmon, be propitious to us!
Or sit you on our shores, bright sons of Jove,
Castor and Pollux! Or the glorious boast
Of Nereus, father of the noble choir
Of fifty Nereids?" One, whose untaught mind
Audacious folly hardened 'gainst the sense
Of holy awe, scoffed at his prayers, and said:
"These are wrecked mariners, that take their seat
In the cleft rock through fear, as they have heard
Our prescribed rite, that here we sacrifice
The stranger." To the greater part he seemed
Well to have spoken, and we judged it meet
To seize the victims, by our country's law
Due to the goddess. Of the stranger youths
One at this instant started from the rock;
Awhile he stood, and wildly tossed his head,
And groaned, his loose arms trembling all their length,
Convulsed with madness: as a hunter loud
Then cried: "Dost thou behold her, Pylades,
Dost thou not see this dragon fierce from hell
Rushing to kill me, and against me rousing
Her horrid vipers? See this other here,
Emitting fire and slaughter from her vests,
Sails on her wings, my mother in her arms
Bearing, to hurl this mass of rock upon me!
Ah, she will kill me! Whither shall I fly?"
His visage might we see no more the same,
And his voice varied, now the roar of bulls,
The howl of dogs now uttering, mimic sounds
Sent by the madd'ning Furies, as they say.
Together thronging, as of death assured,
We sit in silence: but he drew his sword,
And like a lion rushing 'midst our herds
Plunged in their sides the weapon, weening thus
To drive the Furies, till the briny wave
Foamed with their blood. But when among our herds

We saw this havoc made, we all 'gan rouse
To arms, and blew our sounding shells t' alarm
The neighb'ring peasants; for we thought in fight
Rude herdsmen to these youthful strangers, trained
To arms, ill matched; and forthwith to our aid
Flocked numbers. But, his frenzy of its force
Abating, on the earth the stranger falls,
Foam bursting from his mouth? But when we saw
Th' advantage, each adventured on, and hurled
What might annoy him fall'n: the other youth
Wiped off the foam, took of his person care,
His fine-wrought robe spread over him, with heed
The flying stones observing warded off
The wounds, and each kind office to his friend
Attentively performed. His sense returned,
The stranger started up, and soon perceived
The tide of foes that rolled impetuous on,
The danger and distress that closed them round.
He heaved a sigh. An unremitting storm
Of stones we poured, and each incited each.
Then we his dreadful exhortation heard:
"Pylades, we shall die; but let us die
With glory; draw thy sword, and follow me."
But when we saw the enemies advance
With brandished swords, the steep heights crowned
with wood,
We fill in flight: but others, if one flies,
Press on them; if again they drive these back,
What before fled turns, with a storm of stones
Assaulting them; but, what exceeds belief,
Hurled by a thousand hands not one could hit
The victims of the goddess: scarce at length,
Not by brave daring seized we them, but 'round
We closed upon them, and their swords with
stones
Beat, wily, from their hands, for on their knees
They through fatigue had sunk upon the ground.
We bare them to the monarch of this land:
He viewed them, and without delay to thee
Sent them, devoted to the cleansing vase
And to the altar. Victims such as these,
O virgin, wish to find; for if such youths

Thou offer, for thy slaughter Greece will pay,
Her wrongs to thee at Aulis well avenged.

Chorus. These things are wonderful, which thou hast told
Of him, whoe'er he be, the youth from Greece
Arrived on this inhospitable shore.

Iphig. 'Tis well. Go thou, and bring the strangers hither.
What here is to be done shall be our care.
O my unhappy heart! before this hour
To strangers thou wast gentle, always touched
With pity, and with tears their tears repaid,
When Grecians, natives of my country, came
Into my hands: but from the dreams, which prompt
To deeds ungentle, showing that no more
Orestes views the sun's fair light, whoe'er
Ye are that hither come, me will you find
Relentless now. This is the truth, my friends:
My heart is rent; and never will the wretch,
Who feels affliction's cruel tortures, bear
Goodwill to those that are more fortunate.
Never came gale from Jove, nor flying bark,
Which 'twixt the dang'rous rocks of th' Euxine sea
Brought Helen hither, who my ruin wrought,
Nor Menelaus; that on them my foul wrongs
I might repay, and with an Aulis here
Requite the Aulis there, where I was seized,
And, as a heifer, by the Grecians slain.
My father too, who gave me birth, was priest.
Ah me! the sad remembrance of those ills
Yet lives: how often did I stroke thy cheek,
And, hanging on thy knees, address thee thus:
Alas, my father! I by thee am led
A bride to bridal rites unblest and base:
Them, whilst by thee I bleed, my mother hymns,
And th' Argive dames, with hymeneal strains,
And with the jocund pipe the house resounds:
But at the altar I by thee am slain;
For Pluto was th' Achilles, not the son
Of Peleus, whom to me thou didst announce
Th' affianced bridegroom, and by guile didst bring
To bloody nuptials in the rolling car.
But, o'er mine eyes the veil's fine texture spread,
This brother in my hands, who now is lost,

I clasped not, though his sister, did not press
My lips to his through virgin modesty,
As going to the house of Peleus: then
Each fond embrace I to another time
Deferred, as soon to Argos to return.
If, O unhappy brother, thou art dead,
From what a state, thy father's envied height
Of glory, loved Orestes, art thou torn!—
These false rules of the goddess much I blame:
Whoe'er of mortals is with slaughter stained,
Or hath at childbirth given assisting hands,
Or chanced to touch aught dead, she as impure
Drives from her altars; yet herself delights
In human victims bleeding at her shrine.
Ne'er did Latona, from th' embrace of Jove,
Bring forth such inconsistence: I then deem
The feast of Tantalus, where gods were guests,
Unworthy of belief, as that they fed
On his son's flesh delighted: and I think
These people, who themselves have a wild joy
In shedding human blood, their savage guilt
Charge on the goddess: for this truth I hold,
None of the gods is evil or doth wrong.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Ye rocks, ye clashing rocks, whose brow
Frowns o'er the darkened deeps below,
Whose wild inhospitable wave,
From Argos flying and her native spring,
The virgin once was known to brave,
Tormented with the Bryze's madd'ning sting,
From Europe when the rude sea o'er
She passed to Asia's adverse shore;
Who are these hapless youths, that dare to land,
Leaving those soft irriguous meads,
Where, his green margin fringed with reeds,
Eurotas rolls his ample tide,
Or Dirce's hallowed waters glide,
And touch this barb'rous, stranger-hating strand,
The altars where a virgin dews,
And blood the pillared shrine imbrues?

Strophe 2.

Did they with oars impetuous sweep,
Rank answering rank, the foamy deep,
And wing their bark with flying sails,
To raise their humble fortune their desire,
Eager to catch the rising gales,
Their bosoms with the love of gain on fire?
For sweet is Hope, to man's fond breast,
The hope of gain, insatiate guest,
Though on her oft attends Misfortune's train;
For daring man she tempts to brave
The dangers of the boist'rous wave,
And leads him heedless of his fate
Through many a distant, barb'rous state;
Vain his opinions, his pursuits are vain!
Boundless o'er some her power is shown,
But some her temp'rate influence own.

Antistrophe 1.

How did they pass the dang'rous rocks,
Clashing with rude, tremendous shocks?
How pass the savage-howling shore
Where once th' unhappy Phineus held his reign,
And sleep affrighted flies its roar,
Steering their rough course o'er this boist'rous main,
Formed in a ring beneath whose waves
The Nereid train in high-arched caves
Weave the light dance, and raise the sprightly song,
Whilst whisp'ring in their swelling sails
Soft Zephyrs breathe, or southern gales
Piping amidst their tackling play,
As their bark ploughs its wat'ry way
Those hoary cliffs, the haunts of birds, along,
To that wild strand, the rapid race
Where once Achilles deigned to grace?

Antistrophe 2.

Oh that from Troy some chance would bear
Leda's loved daughter, fatal fair
(The royal virgin's vows are mine),
That her bright tresses rolled in crimson dew,
Her warm blood flowing at this shrine,

The altar of the goddess might imbrue,
And Vengeance, righteous to repay
Her former mischiefs, seize her prey!
But with what rapture should I hear his voice,
If one this shore should reach from Greece,
And bid the toils of slav'ry cease!
Or might I in the hour of rest
With pleasing dreams of Greece be blest,
So in my house, my native land rejoice,
In sleep enjoy the pleasing strain
For happiness restored again!

Iphig. But the two youths, their hands fast bound in chains,
The late-seized victims to the goddess, come.
Silence, my friends: for destined at the shrine
To bleed the Grecian strangers near approach,
And no false tidings did the herdsman bring.
Chorus. Goddess revered, if grateful to thy soul
This state presents such sacrifice, accept
The victims, which the custom of this land
Gives thee, but deemed unholy by the Greeks.

IPHIGENIA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

Iphig. No more; that to the goddess each due rite
Be well performed shall be my care. Unchain
The strangers' hands, that, hallowed as they are,
They may no more be bound. Go you, prepare
Within the temple what the rites require.
Unhappy youths, what mother brought you forth?
Your father who? Your sister, if perchance
Ye have a sister, of what youths deprived?
For brother she shall have no more. Who knows
Whom such misfortunes may attend? For dark
What the gods' will creeps on; and none can tell
The ills to come: this fortune from the sight
Obscures. But, O unhappy strangers, say
Whence came you? Sailed you long since for this land?
But long will be your absence from your homes,
For ever, in the dreary realms below.
Orestes. Lady, whoe'er thou art, why for these things

Dost thou lament? Why mourn for ills, which soon
Will fall on us? Him I esteem unwise,
Who, when he sees death near, tries to o'ercome
Its terrors with bewailings, without hope
Of safety: ill he adds to ill, and makes
His folly known, yet dies. We must give way
To fortune: therefore mourn not thou for us:
We know, we are acquainted with your rites.

Iphig. Which of you by the name of Pylades
Is called? This first it is my wish to know.

Orestes. If aught of pleasure that may give thee, he.

Iphig. A native of what Grecian state, declare.

Orestes. What profit, knowing this, wouldst thou obtain?

Iphig. And are you brothers, of one mother born?

Orestes. Brothers by friendship, lady, not by birth.

Iphig. To thee what name was by thy father given?

Orestes. With just cause I Unhappy might be called.

Iphig. I ask not that; to fortune that ascribe.

Orestes. Dying unknown rude scoffs I shall avoid.

Iphig. Wilt thou refuse? Why are thy thoughts so high?

Orestes. My body thou mayst kill, but not my name.

Iphig. Wilt thou not say a native of what state?

Orestes. The question nought avails, since I must die.

Iphig. What hinders thee from granting me this grace?

Orestes. Th' illustrious Argos I my country boast.

Iphig. By the gods, stranger, is thy birth from thence?

Orestes. My birth is from Mycenæ, once the blest.

Iphig. Dost thou an exile fly, or by what fate?

Orestes. Of my free will, in part not free, I fly.

Iphig. Wilt thou then tell me what I wish to know?

Orestes. Whate'er is foreign to my private griefs.

Iphig. To my dear wish from Argos art thou come.

Orestes. Not to my wish: but if to thine, enjoy it.

Iphig. Troy, whose fame spreads so wide, perchance thou knowst.

Orestes. Oh that I ne'er had known her, e'en in dreams!

Iphig. They say she is no more, by war destroyed.

Orestes. It is so: you have heard no false reports.

Iphig. Is Helena with Menelaus returned?

Orestes. She is: and one I love her coming rues.

Iphig. Where is she? Me too she of old hath wronged.

Orestes. At Sparta with her former lord she dwells.

Iphig. By Greece, and not by me alone, abhorred!
Orestes. I from her nuptials have my share of grief.
Iphig. And are the Greeks, as fame reports, returned?
Orestes. How briefly all things dost thou ask at once?
Iphig. This favour, ere thou die, I wish t' obtain.
Orestes. Ask then: since such thy wish, I will inform thee.
Iphig. Calchas, a prophet, came he back from Troy?
Orestes. He perished: at Mycenæ such the fame.
Iphig. Goddess revered! But doth Ulysses live?
Orestes. He lives they say; but is not yet returned.
Iphig. Perish the wretch, nor see his country more!
Orestes. Wish him not ill, for all with him is ill.
Iphig. But doth the son of sea-born Thetis live?
Orestes. He lives not: vain his nuptial rites at Aulis.
Iphig. That all was fraud, as those, who felt it, say.
Orestes. But who art thou, inquiring thus of Greece?
Iphig. I am from thence, in early youth undone.
Orestes. Thou hast a right t' inquire what there hath passed.
Iphig. What knowst thou of the chief, men call the blest?
Orestes. Who? Of the blest was not the chief I knew.
Iphig. The royal Agamemnon, son of Atreus.
Orestes. Of him I know not, lady; cease to ask.
Iphig. Nay, by the gods, tell me, and cheer my soul.
Orestes. He's dead, th' unhappy chief; no single ill.
Iphig. Dead! By what adverse fate? Oh wretched me!
Orestes. Why mourn for this? How doth it touch thy breast?
Iphig. The glories of his former state I mourn.
Orestes. Dreadfully murdered by a woman's hand.
Iphig. How wretched she that slew him, he thus slain!
Orestes. Now then forbear: of him inquire no more.
Iphig. This only; lives th' unhappy monarch's wife?
Orestes. She, lady, is no more, slain by her son.
Iphig. Alas, the ruined house! What his intent?
Orestes. T' avenge on her his noble father slain.
Iphig. An ill, but righteous deed, how justly done!
Orestes. Though righteous, by the gods he is not blest.
Iphig. Hath Agamemnon other offspring left?
Orestes. He left one virgin daughter, named Electra.
Iphig. Of her, that died a victim, is aught said?
Orestes. This only, dead she sees the light no more.
Iphig. Unhappy she! the father too, who slew her!

Orestes. For a bad woman she unseemly died.
Iphig. At Argos lives the murdered father's son?
Orestes. Nowhere he lives, poor wretch, and everywhere.
Iphig. False dreams, farewell: for nothing you import.
Orestes. Nor are those gods, that have the name of wise,
Less false than fleeting dreams. In things divine,
And in things human, great confusion reigns.
One thing is left; that, not unwise of soul,
Obedient to the prophet's voice he perished;
For that he perished they, who know, report.
Chorus. What shall we know, what of our parents know?
If yet they live, or not, who can inform us?
Iphig. Hear me: this converse prompts a thought, which gives
Promise of good, ye youths of Greece, to you,
To these, and me; thus may it well be done,
If willing to my purpose all assent.
Wilt thou, if I shall save thee, go for me
A messenger to Argos, to my friends
Charged with a letter, which a captive wrote,
Who pitied me, nor murd'rous thought my hand,
But that he died beneath the law, these rites
The goddess deeming just? For from that hour
I have not found who might to Argos bear
Himself my message, back with life returned,
Or send to any of my friends my letter.
Thou therefore, since it seems thou dost not bear
Ill will to me, and dost Mycenæ know,
And those I wish t' address, be safe, and live,
No base reward for a light letter life
Receiving: and let him, since thus the state
Requires, without thee to the goddess bleed.
Orestes. Virgin unknown, well hast thou said in all
Save this, that to the goddess he should bleed
A victim; that were heavy grief indeed.
I steered the vessel to these ills, he sailed
Attendant on my toils: to gain thy grace
By his destruction, and withdraw myself
From sufferings, were unjust. Thus let it be:
Give him the letter; to fulfil thy wish
To Argos he will bear it: me let him,
Who claims that office, slay. Base is his soul,

Who in calamities involves his friends,
And saves himself: this is a friend, whose life,
Dear to me as my own, I would preserve.

Iphig. Excellent spirit! From some noble root
It shows thee sprung, and to thy friends a friend
Sincere: of those that share my blood if one
Remains, such may he be; for I am not
Without a brother, strangers, from my sight
Though distant now. Since then thy wish is such,
Him will I send to Argos: he shall bear
My letter, thou shalt die; for this desire
Hath strong possession of thy noble soul.

Orestes. Who then shall do the dreadful deed, and slay me?

Iphig. I: to atone the goddess is my charge.

Orestes. A charge unenvied, virgin, and unblessed.

Iphig. Necessity constrains: I must obey.

Orestes. Wilt thou, a woman, plunge the sword in men?

Iphig. No: but thy locks to sprinkle round is mine.

Orestes. Whose then, if I may ask, the bloody deed?

Iphig. To some within the temple this belongs.

Orestes. What tomb is destined to receive my corse?

Iphig. The hallowed fire within, and a dark cave.

Orestes. Oh that a sister's hand might wrap these limbs!

Iphig. Vain wish, unhappy youth, whoe'er thou art,
Hast thou conceived; for from this barbarous land
Far is her dwelling. Yet of what my power
Permits, since thou from Argos drawst thy birth,
No grace will I omit; for in thy tomb
I will place much of ornament, and pour
The dulcet labour of the yellow bee,
From mountain flowers extracted, on thy pyre.
But I will go, and from the temple bring
The letter: yet 'gainst me no hostile thought
Conceive. You that attend here, guard them well,
But without chains. To one, whom most I love
Of all my friends, to Argos I shall send
Tidings perchance unlooked for; and this letter,
Declaring those, whom he thought dead, alive,
Shall bear him an assured and solid joy.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS.

Chorus. Thee, o'er whose limbs the bloody drops shall soon
Be from the lavers sprinkled, I lament.
Orestes. This asks no pity, strangers: but farewell.
Chorus. Thee, for thy happy fate we reverence, youth,
Who to thy country shalt again return.
Pylades. To friends unwished, who leave their friends to die
Chorus. Painful dismission! Which shall I esteem
Most lost, alas, alas! which most undone!
For doubts my wav'ring judgment yet divide,
If chief for thee my sighs should swell, or thee.
Orestes. By the gods, Pylades, is thy mind touched
In manner like as mine?
Pylades. I cannot tell;
Nor to thy question have I to reply.
Orestes. Who is this virgin? With what zeal for Greece
Made she inquiries of us what the toils
At Troy, if yet the Grecians were returned,
And Calchas, from the flight of birds who formed
Presages of the future? And she named
Achilles: with what tenderness bewailed
Th' unhappy Agamemnon! Of his wife
She asked me, of his children: thence her race
This unknown virgin draws, an Argive; else
Ne'er would she send this letter, nor have wished
To know these things, as if she bore a share,
If Argos flourish, in its prosperous state.
Pylades. Such were my thoughts (but thou hast given them words,
Preventing me), of every circumstance,
Save one: the fate of kings all know, whose state
Holds aught of rank. But pass to other thoughts.
Orestes. What? Share them; so thou best mayst be informed.
Pylades. That thou shouldst die, and I behold this light,
Were base: with thee I sailed, with thee to die
Becomes me; else shall I obtain the name
Of a vile coward through the Argive state,
And the deep vales of Phocis. Most will think,
For most think ill, that by betraying thee
I saved myself, home to return alone:
Or haply that I slew thee, and thy death

Contrived, that in the ruin of thy house
Thy empire I might grasp, to me devolved
As wedded to thy sister, now sole heir.
These things I fear, and hold them infamous.
Behoves me then with thee to die, with thee
To bleed a victim, on the pyre with thine
To give my body to the flames; for this
Becomes me as thy friend, who dread reproach.

Orestes. Speak more auspicious words: 'tis mine to bear
Ills that are mine: and single when the woe,
I would not bear it double. What thou sayst
Is vile and infamous, would light on me,
Should I cause thee to die, who in my toils
Hast borne a share: to me, who from the gods
Suffer afflictions which I suffer, death
Is not unwelcome: thou art happy, thine
An unpolluted and a prosperous house;
Mine impious and unblest. If thou art saved,
And from my sister, whom I gave to thee
Betrothed thy bride, art blessed with sons, my name
May yet remain, nor all my father's house
In total ruin sink. Go then, and live;
Dwell in the mansion of thy ancestors.
And when thou comst to Greece, to Argos famed
For warrior-steeds, by this right hand I charge thee
Raise a sepulchral mound, and on it place
A monument to me; and to my tomb
Her tears, her tresses let my sister give:
And say that by an Argive woman's hand
I perished, to the altar's bloody rites
A hallowed victim. Never let thy soul
Betray my sister, for thou seest her state
Of friends how destitute, her father's house
How desolate. Farewell! Of all my friends
Thee have I found most friendly, from my youth
Trained up with me, in all my sylvan sports
Thou dear associate, and through many toils
Thou faithful partner of my miseries.
Me Phœbus, though a prophet, hath deceived,
And meditating guile hath driven me far
From Greece, of former oracles ashamed;

To him resigned, obedient to his words,
I slew my mother, and my meed is death.
Pylades. Yes, I will raise thy tomb: thy sister's bed
I never will betray, unhappy youth,
For I will hold thee dearer when thou'rt dead,
Than while thou livest; nor hath yet the voice
Of Phœbus quite destroyed thee, though thou stand
To slaughter nigh: but sometimes mighty woes
Yield mighty changes, so when fortune wills.
Orestes. Forbear: the words of Phœbus nought avail me;
For passing from the shrine the virgin comes.

IPHIGENIA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

Iphig. Go you away [*to the Guards*], and in the shrine prepare
What those, who o'er the rites preside, require.—
Here, strangers, is the letter folded close.
What I would further, hear: the mind of man
In dangers, and again from fear relieved
Of safety when assured, is not the same:
I therefore fear lest he, who should convey
To Argos this epistle, when returned
Safe to his native country will neglect
My letter, as a thing of little worth.
Orestes. What wouldst thou then? What is thy anxious thought?
Iphig. This; let him give an oath that he will bear
To Argos this epistle to those friends
To whom it is my ardent wish to send it.
Orestes. And wilt thou in return give him thy oath?
Iphig. That I will do, or will not do, say what.
Orestes. To send him from this barbarous shore alive.
Iphig. That's just; how should he bear my letter else?
Orestes. But will the monarch to these things assent?
Iphig. By me induced. Him I will see embarked.
Orestes. Swear then; and thou propose the righteous oath.
Iphig. This, let him say, he to my friends will give.
Pylades. Well; to thy friends this letter I will give.
Iphig. Thee will I send safe through the dark'ning rocks.
Pylades. What god dost thou invoke t' attest thy oath?
Iphig. Diana, at whose shrine high charge I hold.
Pylades. And I heaven's potent king, the awful Jove.

Iphig. But if thou slight thy oath, and do me wrong?
Pylades. Never may I return. But if thou fail,
And save me not?
Iphig. Then never whilst I live
May I revisit my loved Argos more.
Pylades. One thing, not mentioned, thy attention claims.
Iphig. If honour owns it, this will touch us both.
Pylades. Let me in this be pardoned, if the bark
Be lost, and with it in the surging waves
Thy letter perish, and I naked gain
The shore, no longer binding be the oath.
Iphig. Knowst thou what I will do? For various ills
Arise to those that plough the dangerous deep.
What in this letter is contained, what here
Is written, all I will repeat to thee,
That thou mayst bear my message to my friends.
'Gainst danger thus I guard: if thou preserve
The letter, that though silent will declare
My purport: if it perish in the sea
Saving thyself my words too thou wilt save.
Pylades. Well hast thou said touching the gods and me.
Say then, to whom at Argos shall I bear
This letter? What relate as heard from thee?
Iphig. This message to Orestes, to the son
Of Agamemnon bear: "She, who was slain
At Aulis, Iphigenia, sends thee this:
She lives, but not to those who then were there."
Orestes. Where is she? From the dead returned to life?
Iphig. She whom thou seest; but interrupt me not.
To Argos, O my brother, ere I die
Bear me from this barbaric land, and far
Remove me from this altar's bloody rites,
At which to slay the stranger is my charge.
Orestes. What shall I say? Where are we, Pylades?
Iphig. Or on thy house for vengeance will I call,
Orestes—Twice repeated, learn the name.
Orestes. Ye gods!
Iphig. In my cause why invoke the gods?
Orestes. Nothing; proceed. My thoughts were wand'ring wide.
Strange things of thee unasked I soon shall learn.
Iphig. Tell him the goddess saved me, in exchange

A hind presenting, which my father slew
A victim, deeming that he plunged his sword
Deep in my breast; me in this land she placed.
Thou hast my charge; and this my letter speaks.

Pylades. Oh thou hast bound me with an easy oath;
What I have sworn with honest purpose, long
Defer I not, but thus discharge mine oath.
To thee a letter from thy sister, lo,
I bear, Orestes; and I give it thee.

Orestes. I do receive it, but forbear t' unclose
Its foldings, greater pleasure first t' enjoy
Than words can give. My sister, O most dear,
Astonished e'en to disbelief I throw
Mine arms around thee with a fond embrace,
In transport at the wond'rous things I hear.

Chorus. Stranger, thou dost not well with hands profane
Thus to pollute the priestess of the shrine,
Grasping her garments hallowed from the touch.

Orestes. My sister, my dear sister, from one sire,
From Agamemnon sprung, turn not away,
Holding thy brother thus beyond all hope.

Iphig. My brother! Thou my brother! Wilt thou not
Unsay these words? At Argos far he dwells.

Orestes. Thy brother, O unhappy! is not there.

Iphig. Thee did the Spartan Tyndarus bring forth?

Orestes. And from the son of Pelops' son I sprung.

Iphig. What sayst thou? Canst thou give me proof of this?

Orestes. I can: ask something of my father's house.

Iphig. Nay, it is thine to speak, mine to attend.

Orestes. First let me mention things which I have heard
Electra speak: to thee is known the strife
Which fierce 'twixt Atreus and Thyestes rose.

Iphig. Yes, I have heard it; for the golden ram.

Orestes. In the rich texture didst thou not inweave it?

Iphig. O thou most dear! Thou windest near my heart.

Orestes. And image in the web th' averted sun?

Iphig. In the fine threads that figure did I work.

Orestes. For Aulis did thy mother bathe thy limbs?

Iphig. I know it, to unlucky spousals led.

Orestes. Why to thy mother didst thou send thy locks?

Iphig. Devoted for my body to the tomb.

Orestes. What I myself have seen I now as proofs
Will mention. In thy father's house hung high
Within thy virgin chambers the old spear
Of Pelops, which he brandished when he slew
Œnomaus, and won his beauteous bride,
The virgin Hippodamia, Pisa's boast.
Iphig. O thou most dear, for thou art he, most dear
Acknowledged, thee, Orestes, do I hold,
From Argos, from thy country distant far?
Orestes. And hold I thee, my sister, long deemed dead?
Grief mixed with joy, and tears, not taught by woe
To rise, stand melting in thy eyes and mine.
Iphig. Thee yet an infant in thy nurse's arms
I left, a babe I left thee in the house.
Thou art more happy, O my soul, than speech
Knows to express. What shall I say? 'Tis all
Surpassing wonder and the power of words.
Orestes. May we together from this hour be blest!
Iphig. An unexpected pleasure, O my friends,
Have I received; yet fear I from my hands
Lest to the air it fly. O sacred hearths
Raised by the Cyclops! O my country, loved
Mycenæ! Now that thou didst give me birth
I thank thee; now I thank thee that my youth
Thou trainedst, since my brother thou hast trained,
A beam of light, the glory of his house.
Orestes. We in our race are happy; but our life,
My sister, by misfortunes is unhappy.
Iphig. I was, I know, unhappy when the sword
My father, frentic, pointed at my neck.
Orestes. Ah me! methinks e'en now I see thee there.
Iphig. When to Achilles, brother, not a bride
I to the sacrifice by guile was led,
And tears and groans the altar compassed round.
Orestes. Alas the lavers there!
Iphig. I mourned the deed
My father dared; unlike a father's love,
Cruel, unlike a father's love, to me.
Orestes. Ill deeds succeed to ill; if thou hadst slain
Thy brother, by some god impelled, what griefs
Must have been thine at such a dreadful deed!
Iphig. Dreadful, my brother, oh how dreadful! Scarce

Hast thou escaped a foul, unhallowed death,
Slain by my hands. But how will these things end?
What fortune will assist me? What safe means
Shall I devise to send thee from this state,
From slaughter, to thy native land, to Argos,
Ere with thy blood the cruel sword be stained?
This to devise, O my unhappy soul!
This to devise is thine. Wilt thou by land,
Thy bark deserted, speed thy flight on foot?
Perils await thee 'midst these barbarous tribes
Through pathless wilds. And 'twixt the clashing rocks
Narrow the passage for the flying bark,
And long. Unhappy, ah unhappy me!
What god, what mortal, what unlooked-for chance
Will expedite our dangerous way, and show
Two sprung from Atreus a release from ills?

Chorus. What having seen and heard I shall relate
Is marvellous, and passes fabling tales.

Pylades. When after absence long, Orestes, friend
Meets friend, embraces will express their joy.
Behoves us now, bidding farewell to grief
And heedful to obtain the glorious name
Of safety, from this barbarous land to fly.
The wise, of fortune not regardless, seize
Th' occasion, and to happiness advance.

Orestes. Well hast thou said; and Fortune here, I ween,
Will aid us: to the firm and strenuous mind
More potent works the influence divine.

Iphig. Nothing shall check, nothing restrain my speech:
First will I question thee what fortune waits
Electra: this to know would yield me joy.

Orestes. With him she dwells, and happy is her life.

Iphig. Whence then is he? and from what father sprung?

Orestes. From Phocis: Strophius is his father named.

Iphig. By Atreus' daughter to my blood allied?

Orestes. Nearly allied: my only faithful friend.

Iphig. He was not then, me when my father slew.

Orestes. Childless was Strophius for some length of time.

Iphig. O thou, the husband of my sister, hail!

Orestes. More than relation, my preserver too.

Iphig. But to thy mother why that dreadful deed?

Orestes. Of that no more: t' avenge my father's death.

Iphig. But for what cause did she her husband slay?
Orestes. Of her inquire not: thou wouldst blush to hear.
Iphig. The eyes of Argos now are raised to thee.
Orestes. There Menelaus is lord; I, outcast, fly.
Iphig. Hath he then wronged his brother's ruined house?
Orestes. Not so: the Furies fright me from the land.
Iphig. The madness this, which seized thee on the shore?
Orestes. I was not first beheld unhappy there.
Iphig. Stern powers; they haunt thee for thy mother's blood.
Orestes. And ruthless make me champ the bloody bit.
Iphig. Why to this region hast thou steered thy course?
Orestes. Commanded by Apollo's voice I come.
Iphig. With that intent? if that may be disclosed.
Orestes. I will inform thee, though to length of speech
This leads. When vengeance from my hands o'ertook
My mother's deed, foul deeds which let me pass
In silence, by the Furies' fierce assaults
To flight I was impelled: to Athens then
Apollo sent me, that, my cause there heard,
I might appease the vengeful powers, whose names
May not be uttered. The tribunal there
Is holy, which for Mars when stained with blood
Jove in old times established. There arrived
None willingly received me, by the gods
As one abhorred; and they, who felt the touch
Of shame, the hospitable board alone
Yielded, and though one common roof beneath,
Their silence showing they disdained to hold
Converse with me, I took from them apart
A lone repast; to each was placed a bowl
Of the same measure; this they filled with wine,
And bathed their spirits in delight. Unmeet
I deemed it to express offence at those
Who entertained me, but in silence grieved,
Showing a cheer as though I marked it not,
And sighed for that I shed my mother's blood.
A feast, I hear, at Athens is ordained
From this my evil plight, e'en yet observed,
In which the equal-measured bowl then used
Is by that people held in honour high.
But when to the tribunal on the mount
Of Mars I came, one stand I took, and one

The eldest of the Furies opposite:
The cause was heard touching my mother's blood,
And Phœbus saved me by his evidence;
Equal, by Pallas numbered, were the votes,
And I from doom of blood victorious freed.
Such of the Furies as there sate, appeased
By the just sentence, nigh the court resolved
To fix their seat; but others, whom the law
Appeased not, with relentless tortures still
Pursued me, till I reached the hallowed soil
Of Phœbus. Stretched before his shrine I swore
Foodless to waste my wretched life away,
Unless the god, by whom I was undone,
Would save me. From the golden tripod burst
The voice divine, and sent me to this shore,
Commanding me to bear the image hence,
Which fell from Jove, and in th' Athenian land
To fix it. What th' oracular voice assigned
My safety, do thou aid. If we obtain
The statue of the goddess, I no more
With madness shall be tortured, but this arm
Shall place thee in my bark, which ploughs the waves
With many an oar, and to Mycenæ safe
Bear thee again. Show then a sister's love,
O thou most dear, preserve thy father's house,
Preserve me too; for me destruction waits,
And all the race of Pelops, it we bear not
This heaven-descended image from the shrine.

Chorus. The anger of the gods hath raged severe,
And plunged the race of Tantalus in woes.

Iphig. Ere thy arrival here, a fond desire
To be again at Argos, and to see
Thee, my loved brother, filled my soul. Thy wish
Is my warm wish, to free thee from thy toils,
And from its ruins raise my father's house;
Nor harbour I 'gainst him, that slew me, thought
Of harsh resentment: from thy blood my hands
Would I keep pure, thy house I would preserve.
But from the goddess how may this be hid?
The tyrant too I fear, when he shall find
The statue on its marble base no more.
What then from death will save me? What excuse

Shall I devise? Yet by one daring deed
Might these things be achieved, couldst thou bear hence
The image, me too in thy gallant bark
Placing secure, how glorious were th' attempt!
Me if thou join not with thee, I am lost
Indeed; but thou, with prudent measures formed,
Return. I fly no danger, not e'en death,
Be death required, to save thee. No: the man
Dying is mourned as to his house a loss;
But woman's weakness is of light esteem.

Orestes. I would not be the murderer of my mother,
And of thee too; sufficient is her blood.
No; I will share thy fortune, live with thee,
Or with thee die: to Argos I will lead thee,
If here I perish not; or dying here
Remain with thee. But what my mind suggests
Hear: if Diana were averse to this,
How could the voice of Phœbus from his shrine
Declare that to the state of Pallas hence
The statue of the goddess I should bear,
And see thy face? All this together weighed
Gives hope of fair success, and our return.

Iphig. But how effect it, that we neither die,
And what we wish achieve? For our return
On this depends: this claims deliberate thought.

Orestes. Have we not means to work the tyrant's death?

Iphig. For strangers full of peril were th' attempt.

Orestes. Thee would it save and me, it must be dared.

Iphig. I could not: yet thy promptness I approve.

Orestes. What if thou lodge me in the shrine concealed?

Iphig. That in the shades of night we may escape?

Orestes. Night is a friend to frauds, the light to truth.

Iphig. Within are sacred guards; we 'scape not them.

Orestes. Ruin then waits us: how can we be saved?

Iphig. I think I have some new and safe device.

Orestes. What is it? Let me know: impart thy thought.

Iphig. Thy sufferings for my purpose I will use.

Orestes. To form devices quick is woman's wit.

Iphig. And say, thy mother slain thou fledst from Argos.

Orestes. If to aught good, avail thee of my ills.

Iphig. Unmeet then at this shrine to offer thee.

Orestes. What cause alleged? I reach not thine intent.
Iphig. As now impure: when hallowed, I will slay thee.
Orestes. How is the image thus more promptly gained?
Iphig. Thee I will hallow in the ocean waves.
Orestes. The statue we would gain is in the temple.
Iphig. That, by thy touch polluted, I would cleanse.
Orestes. Where? On the wat'ry margin of the main?
Iphig. Where thy tall bark secured with cables rides.
Orestes. And who shall bear the image in his hands?
Iphig. Myself: profaned by any touch but mine.
Orestes. What of this blood shall on my friend be charged?
Iphig. His hands, it shall be said, like thine are stained.
Orestes. In secret this, or to the king disclosed?
Iphig. With his assent; I cannot hide it from him.
Orestes. My bark with ready oars attends thee near.
Iphig. That all be well appointed be thy charge.
Orestes. One thing alone remains, that these conceal
Our purpose: but address them, teach thy tongue
Persuasive words: a woman hath the power
To melt the heart to pity: thus perchance
All things may to our warmest wish succeed.
Iphig. Ye train of females, to my soul most dear,
On you mine eyes are turned, on you depends
My fate: with prosperous fortune to be blest,
Or to be nothing, to my country lost,
Of a dear kinsman and a much loved brother
Deprived. This plea I first would urge, that we
Are women, and have hearts by nature formed
To love each other, of our mutual trusts
Most firm preservers. Touching our design
Be silent, and assist our flight; nought claims
More honour than the faithful tongue. You see
How the same fortune links us three, most dear
Each to the other, to revisit safe
Our country, or to die. If I am saved,
That thou mayst share my fortune, I to Greece
Will bring thee safe: but thee by this right hand,
Thee I conjure, and thee; by this loved cheek
Thee, by thy knees, by all that in your house
Is dearest to you, father, mother, child,
If you have children. What do you reply?
Which of you speaks assent? Or which dissents?

But be you all assenting: for my plea
If you approve not, ruin falls on me,
And my unhappy brother too must die.

Chorus. Be confident, loved lady, and consult
Only thy safety: all thou givst in charge,
Be witness, mighty Jove, I will conceal.

Iphig. Oh for this generous promise be you blest!
To enter now the temple be thy part,
And thine: for soon the monarch of the land
Will come, inquiring if the strangers yet
Have bowed their necks as victims at the shrine.—
Goddess revered, who in the dreadful bay
Of Aulis from my father's slaughtering hand
Didst save me, save me now, and these; through thee
Else will the voice of Phœbus be no more
Held true by mortals: from this barbarous land
To Athens go propitious; here to dwell
Beseems thee not: thine be a polished state!

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

O bird, that round each craggy height
Projecting o'er the sea below,
Wheelest thy melancholy flight,
Thy song attuned to notes of woe;
The wise thy tender sorrows own,
Which thy lost lord unceasing moan:
Like thine, sad Halcyon, be my strain,
A bird that have no wings to fly:
With fond desire for Greece I sigh,
And for my much loved social train;
Sigh for Diana, pitying maid,
Who joys to rove o'er Cynthus' heights,
Or in the branching laurel's shade,
Or in the soft-haired palm delights,
Or the hoar olive's sacred boughs,
Lenient of sad Latona's woes,
Or in the lake that rolls its wave
Where swans their plumage love to lave,
Then to the Muses soaring high,
The homage pay of melody.

Antistrophe 1.

Ye tears, what frequent-falling showers
Rolled down these cheeks in streams of woe,
When in the dust my country's towers
Lay levelled by the conquering foe;
And, to their spears a prey, their oars
Brought me to these barbaric shores!
For gold exchanged, a traffic base,
No vulgar slave, the task is mine
Here at Diana's awful shrine,
Who loves the woodland hind to chase,
The virgin priestess to attend,
Daughter of rich Mycenæ's lord;
At other shrines her wish to bend,
Where bleeds the victim less abhorred:
No respite to her griefs she knows,
Not so the heart inured to woes,
As trained to sorrow's rigid lore:
Now comes a change, it mourns no more.
But to long bliss when ill succeeds
The anguished heart for ever bleeds.

Strophe 2.

Thee, loved virgin, freed from fear
Home the Argive bark shall bear:
Mountain Pan, with shrilling strain,
To the oars that dash the main
In just cadence well agreed,
Shall accord his wax-joined reed:
Phœbus, with a prophet's fire
Sweeping o'er his seven-stringed lyre,
And his voice attuning high
To the swelling harmony,
Thee shall guide the wild waves o'er
To the soft Athenian shore.
Leaving me, thy oars shall sweep
Eager o'er the foaming deep;
Thou shalt catch the rising gales
Swelling in thy firm-bound sails,
And thy bark in gallant pride
Light shall o'er the billows glide.

Antistrophe 2.

Might I through the lucid air
Fly where rolls yon flaming car,
O'er these loved and modest bowers,
Where I passed my youthful hours,
I would stay my weary flight,
Wave no more my pennons light,
But amidst the virgin band,
Once my loved companions, stand:
Once 'midst them my charms could move,
Blooming then, the flames of love,
When the mazy dance I trod,
Whilst with joy my mother glowed;
When to vie in grace was mine,
And in splendid robes to shine;
For with radiant tints imprest
Glowed for me the gorgeous vest;
And these tresses gave new grace,
As their ringlets shade my face.

THOAS, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

Thoas. Where is the Grecian lady, to whose charge
This temple is committed? Have her rites
Hallowed the strangers? Do their bodies burn
In the recesses of the sacred shrine?
Chorus. She comes, and will inform thee, king, of all.
Thoas. Daughter of Agamemnon, what means this!
The statue of the goddess in thine arms
Why dost thou bear from its firm base removed?
Iphig. There in the portal, monarch, stay thy step.
Thoas. What of strange import in the shrine hath chanced?
Iphig. Things ominous: that word I, holy, speak.
Thoas. To what is tuned thy proem? Plainly speak.
Iphig. Not pure the victims, king, you lately seized.
Thoas. What showed thee this? Or speakst thou but thy thought?
Iphig. Back turned the sacred image on its base.
Thoas. Spontaneous turned, or by an earthquake moved?
Iphig. Spontaneous; and, averted, closed its eyes.
Thoas. What was the cause? The blood-stained strangers' guilt?

Iphig. That and nought else; for horrible their deeds.
Thoas. What, have they slain some Scythian on the shore?
Iphig. They came polluted with domestic blood.
Thoas. What blood? I have a strong desire to know.
Iphig. They slew their mother with confederate swords.
Thoas. O Phœbus! This hath no barbarian dared.
Iphig. All Greece indignant chased them from her realms.
Thoas. Bearst thou for this the image from the shrine?
Iphig. To the pure air, from stain of blood removed.
Thoas. By what means didst thou know the strangers' guilt?
Iphig. I learned it as the statue started back.
Thoas. Greece trained thee wise: this well hast thou discerned.
Iphig. Now with sweet blandishments they soothe my soul.
Thoas. Some glozing tale from Argos telling thee?
Iphig. I have one brother: he, they say, lives happy.
Thoas. That thou mayst save them for their pleasing news?
Iphig. And that my father lives, by fortune blessed.
Thoas. But on the goddess well thy thoughts are turned.
Iphig. I hate all Greece; for it hath ruined me.
Thoas. What with the strangers, say then, should be done?
Iphig. The law ordained in reverence we must hold.
Thoas. Are then thy lavers ready, and the sword?
Iphig. First I would cleanse them with ablutions pure.
Thoas. In fountain waters, or the ocean wave?
Iphig. All man's pollutions doth the salt sea cleanse.
Thoas. More holy to the goddess will they bleed.
Iphig. And better what I have in charge advance.
Thoas. Doth not the wave e'en 'gainst the temple beat?
Iphig. This requires solitude: more must I do.
Thoas. Lead where thou wilt: on secret rites I pry not.
Iphig. The image of the goddess I must cleanse.
Thoas. If it be stained with touch of mother's blood.
Iphig. I could not else have borne it from its base.
Thoas. Just is thy provident and pious thought:
For this by all the state thou art revered.
Iphig. Knowst thou what next I would?
Thoas. 'Tis thine thy will
To signify.
Iphig. Give for these strangers chains.
Thoas. To what place can they fly?

Iphig. A Grecian knows
Nought faithful.
Thoas. Of my train go some for chains.
Iphig. Let them lead forth the strangers.
Thoas. Be it so.
Iphig. And veil their faces.
Thoas. From the sun's bright beams?
Iphig. Some of thy train send with me.
Thoas. These shall go
Attending thee.
Iphig. One to the city send.
Thoas. With what instructions charged?
Iphig. That all remain
Within their houses.
Thoas. That the stain of blood
They meet not?
Iphig. These things have pollution in them.
Thoas. Go thou, and bear th' instructions.
Iphig. That none come
In sight.
Thoas. How wisely careful for the city!
Iphig. Warn our friends most.
Thoas. This speaks thy care for me.
Iphig. Stay thou before the shrine.
Thoas. To what intent?
Iphig. Cleanse it with lustral fires.
Thoas. That thy return
May find it pure?
Iphig. But when the strangers come
Forth from the temple.
Thoas. What must I then do?
Iphig. Spread o'er thine eyes a veil.
Thoas. That I receive not
Pollution?
Iphig. Tedious if my stay appear.
Thoas. What bounds may be assigned?
Iphig. Deem it not strange.
Thoas. At leisure what the rites require perform.
Iphig. May this lustration as I wish succeed.
Thoas. Thy wish is mine.
Iphig. But from the temple, see,
The strangers come, the sacred ornaments,

The hallowed lambs, for I with blood must wash
This execrable blood away, the light
Of torches, and what else my rites require
To purify these strangers to the goddess.
But to the natives of this land my voice
Proclaims, from this pollution far remove,
Art thou attendant at the shrine, who liftest
Pure to the gods thy hands, or nuptial rites
Dost thou prepare, or pregnant matron, hence
Be gone, that this defilement none may touch.
Thou, daughter of Latona and high Jove,
O royal virgin, if I cleanse the stain
Of these, and where I ought with holy rites
Address thee, thou shalt hold thy residence
In a pure mansion; we too shall be blest!
More though I speak not, goddess, unexpressed
All things to thee and to the gods are known.

Chorus. Latona's glorious offspring claims the song,
Born the hallowed shades among
Where fruitful Delos winds her valleys low;
Bright-haired Phœbus skilled t' inspire
Raptures as he sweeps the lyre,
And she that glories in th' unerring bow.
From the rocky ridges steep,
At whose foot the hushed waves sleep,
Left their far-famed native shore,
Them th' exulting mother bore
To Parnassus, on whose heights
Bacchus shouting holds his rites;
Glitt'ring in the burnished shade,
By the laurel's branches made,
Where th' enormous dragon lies,
Brass his scales, and flame his eyes,
Earth-born monster, that around
Rolling guards th' oracular ground:
Him, while yet a sportive child
In his mother's arms that smiled,
Phœbus slew, and seized the shrine
Whence proceeds the voice divine;
On the golden tripod placed,
Throne by falsehood ne'er disgraced,
Where Castalia's pure stream flows,

He the fates to mortals shows.
But when Themis, whom of yore
Earth, her fruitful mother, bore,
From her hallowed seat he drove,
Earth t' avenge her daughter strove,
Forming visions of the night,
Which, in rapt dreams hov'ring light,
All that Time's dark volumes hold
Might to mortal sense unfold,
When in midnight's sable shades
Sleep the silent couch invades:
Thus did Earth her vengeance boast.
His prophetic honours lost,
Royal Phœbus speeds his flight
To Olympus, on whose height
At the throne of Jove he stands,
Stretching forth his little hands,
Suppliant that the Pythian shrine
Feel no more the wrath divine;
That the goddess he appease,
That her nightly visions cease.
Jove with smiles beheld his son
Early thus address his throne,
Suing with ambitious pride
O'er the rich shrine to preside:
He assenting bowed his head.
Straight the nightly visions fled;
And prophetic dreams no more
Hovered slumb'ring mortals o'er:
Now to Phœbus given again
All his honours pure remain;
Votaries distant regions send
His frequented throne t' attend,
And the firm decrees of fate
On his faithful voice await.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mess. Say you, that keep the temple and attend
The altar, where is Thoas, Scythia's king?
Open these strong-compactéd gates, and call
Forth from the shrine the monarch of the land.

Chorus. Wherefore? At thy command if I must speak.
Mess. The two young men are gone, through the device
Of Agamemnon's daughter; from this land
They fly, and in their Grecian galley placed
The sacred image of the goddess bear.
Chorus. Incredible thy tale: but whom thou seekest
The monarch from the temple went in haste.
Mess. Whither? For what is doing he should know.
Chorus. We know not: but go thou and seek for him:
Where'er thou find him, thou wilt tell him this.
Mess. See, what a faithless race you women are!
In all that hath been done you have a part.
Chorus. Sure thou art mad? What with the strangers' flight
Have we to do? But wilt thou not with all
The speed thou mayst go to the monarch's house?
Mess. Not till I first am well informed if here
Within the temple be the king or not.
Unbar the gates: to you within I speak;
And tell your lord that at the portal here
I stand, and bring him tidings of fresh ills.

THOAS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Thoas. Who at the temple of the goddess dares
This clamour raise, and thund'ring at the gates
Strikes terror through the ample space within?
Mess. With falsehoods would these women drive me hence,
Without to seek thee; thou wast in the shrine.
Thoas. With what intent? Or what advantage sought?
Mess. Of these hereafter: what more urgent now
Imports thee, hear: the virgin, in this place
Presiding at the altars, from this land
Is with the strangers fled, and bears with her
The sacred image of the goddess: all
Of her ablutions but a false pretence.
Thoas. How sayst thou? What is her accursed design?
Mess. To save Orestes: this too will amaze thee.
Thoas. Whom? What Orestes? Clytemnestra's son?
Mess. Him at the altar hallowed now to bleed.
Thoas. Portentous! For what less can it be called?
Mess. Think not on that, but hear me; with deep thought

Reflect; weigh well what thou shalt hear, devise
By what pursuit to reach and seize the strangers.
Thoas. Speak: thou advisest well; the sea though nigh,
They fly not so as to escape my spear.
Mess. When to the shore we came, where stationed rode
The galley of Orestes by the rocks
Concealed, to us, whom thou hadst sent with her
To hold the strangers' chains, the royal maid
Made signs that we retire, and stand aloof,
As if with secret rites she would perform
The purposed expiation: on she went
In her own hands holding the strangers' chains
Behind them: not without suspicion this,
Yet by thy servants, king, allowed. At length,
That we might deem her in some purpose high
Employed, she raised her voice, and chaunted loud
Barbaric strains, as if with mystic rites
She cleansed the stain of blood. When we had sate
A tedious while, it came into our thought
That from their chains unloosed the stranger youths
Might kill her, and escape by flight; yet fear
Of seeing what we ought not kept us still
In silence; but at length we all resolved
To go, though not permitted, where they were.
There we behold the Grecian bark, with oars
Well furnished, winged for flight; and at their seats
Grasping their oars were fifty rowers; free
From chains beside the stern the two youths stood.
Some from the prow relieved the keel with poles;
Some weighed the anchors up; the climbing ropes
Some hastened, through their hands the cables drew.
Launched the light bark, and gave her to the main.
But when we saw their treacherous wiles, we rushed
Heedless of danger, seized the priestess, seized
The halsers, hung upon the helm, and strove
To rend the rudder-bands away. Debate
Now rose: "What mean you, sailing o'er the seas,
The statue and the priestess from the land
By stealth conveying? Whence art thou, and who,
That bearst her, like a purchased slave, away?"
He said: "I am her brother, be of this
Informed, Orestes, son of Agamemnon;

My sister, so long lost, I bear away,
Recovered here." But nought the less for that
Held we the priestess, and by force would lead
Again to thee; hence dreadful on our cheeks
The blows; for in their hands no sword they held,
Nor we; but many a rattling stroke the youths
Dealt with their fists, against our sides and breasts
Their arms fierce darting, till our battered limbs
Were all disabled. Now with dreadful marks
Disfigured up the precipice we fly,
Some bearing on their heads, some in their eyes
The bloody bruises; standing on the heights
Our fight was safer, and we hurled at them
Fragments of rocks; but standing on the stern
The archers with their arrows drove us thence.
And now a swelling wave rolled in, which drove
The galley tow'rds the land; the sailors feared
The sudden swell. On his left arms sustained
Orestes bore his sister through the tide,
Mounted the bark's tall side, and on the deck
Safe placed her, and Diana's holy image
Which fell from heaven: from the midship his voice
He sent aloud, "Ye youths, that in this bark
From Argos ploughed the deep, now ply your oars,
And dash the billows till they foam: those things
Are ours, for which we swept the Euxine sea,
And steered our course within its clashing rocks."
They gave a cheerful shout, and with their oars
Dashed the salt wave. The galley, whilst it rode
Within the harbour, worked its easy way;
But having passed its mouth, the swelling flood
Rolled on it, and with sudden force the wind
Impetuous rising drove it back; their oars
They slacked not, stoutly struggling 'gainst the wave;
But tow'rds the land the refluent flood impelled
The galley; then the royal virgin stood,
And prayed: "O daughter of Latona, save me,
Thy priestess save; from this barbaric land
To Greece restore me, and forgive my thefts;
For thou, O goddess, dost thy brother love,
Deem then that I love those allied to me."
The mariners responsive to her prayer

Shouted loud pæans, and their naked arms,
Each cheering each, to their stout oars apply.
But nearer, and yet nearer to the rock
The galley drove; some rushed into the sea,
Some strained the ropes that bind the loosened sails.
Straight was I hither sent to thee, O king,
T' inform thee of these accidents. But haste,
Take chains and gyves with thee; for if the flood
Subside not to a calm, there is no hope
Of safety to the strangers. Be assured
That Neptune, awful monarch of the main,
Remembers Troy, and, hostile to the race
Of Pelops, will deliver to thy hands,
And to thy people, as is meet, the son
Of Agamemnon; and bring back to thee
His sister, who the goddess hath betrayed,
Unmindful of the blood at Aulis shed.

Chorus. Unhappy Iphigenia, thou must die,
Thy brother too must die, if thou again,
Seized in thy flight, to thy lord's hands shalt come.

Thoas. Inhabitants of this barbaric land,
Will you not rein your steeds, will you not fly
Along the shore, to seize whate'er this skiff
Of Greece casts forth, and for your goddess roused
Hunt down these impious men? Will you not launch
Instant your swift-oared barks, by sea, by land
To catch them, from the rugged rock to hurl
Their bodies, or impale them on the stake?
But for you women, in these dark designs
Accomplices, hereafter, as I find
Convenient leisure, I will punish you.
Th' occasion urges now, and gives no pause.

Minerva. Whither, O royal Thoas, dost thou lead
This vengeful chase? Attend; Minerva speaks.
Cease thy pursuit, and stop this rushing flood
Of arms; for hither by the fateful voice
Of Phœbus came Orestes, warned to fly
The anger of the Furies, to convey
His sister to her native Argos back,
And to my land the sacred image bear.
Thoas, I speak to thee: him, whom thy rage
Would kill, Orestes, on the wild waves seized,

Neptune, to do me grace, already wafts
On the smooth sea, the swelling surges calmed.
And thou, Orestes (for my voice thou hearest,
Though distant far), to my commands attend:
Go, with the sacred image, which thou bearest,
And with thy sister: but when thou shalt come
To Athens, built by gods, there is a place
On th' extreme borders of the Attic land,
Close neighb'ring to Carystia's craggy height,
Sacred, my people call it Alæ: there
A temple raise, and fix the statue there,
Which from the Tauric goddess shall receive
Its name, and from thy toils, which thou, through Greece
Driven by the Furies' madd'ning stings, hast borne;
And mortals shall in future times with hymns
The Tauric goddess there, Diana, hail.
And be this law established, when the feast
For thy deliverance from this shrine is held,
To a man's throat that they apply the sword,
And draw the blood, in memory of these rites,
That of her honours nought the goddess lose.
Thou, Iphigenia, on the hallowed heights
Of Brauron on this goddess shalt attend
Her priestess, dying shalt be there interred,
Graced with the honours of the gorgeous vests
Of finest texture, in their houses left
By matrons who in childbed pangs expired.
These Grecian dames back to their country lead,
I charge thee: justice this return demands;
For I saved thee, when on the mount of Mars
The votes were equal: and from that decree,
The shells in number equal, still absolve.
But, son of Agamemnon, from this land
Thy sister bear; nor, Thoas, be thou angry.

Thoas. Royal Minerva, he that hears the gods
Commanding, and obeys not, is unwise.
My anger 'gainst Orestes flames no more,
Gone though he be, and bears with him away
The statue of the goddess, and his sister.
Have mortals glory 'gainst the powerful gods
Contending? Let them go, and to thy land

The sacred image bear, and fix it there;
Good fortune go with them. To favoured Greece
These dames, at thy high bidding, I will send.
My arms will I restrain, which I had raised
Against the strangers, and my swift-oared barks,
Since, potent goddess, this is pleasing to thee.

Minerva. I praise thy resolution; for the power
Of fate o'er thee and o'er the gods prevails.
Breathe soft ye fav'ring gales, to Athens bear
These sprung from Agamemnon; on their course
Attending I will go, and heedful save
My sister's sacred image. You too go [*to the* CHORUS]
Prosp'rous, and in the fate that guards you blest.

Chorus. O thou, among th' immortal gods revered,
And mortal men, Minerva, we will do
As thou commandest; for with transport high,
Exceeding hope, our ears receive thy words.
O Victory, I revere thy awful power:
Guard thou my life, nor ever cease to crown me!

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